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IN HEAVEN

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RECOGNITION

IN

HEAVEN.

BY

M. RHODES, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG MEN," ETC.

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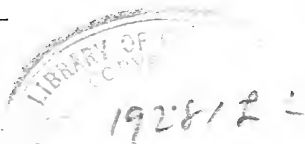
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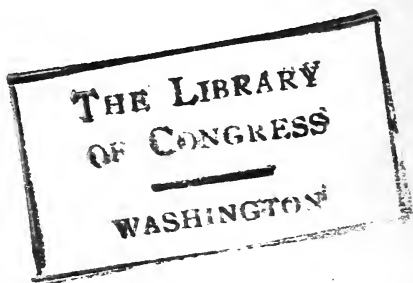
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THE HALLOWED MEMORY OF MY DEAR SISTER,

MARY ELIZABETH RHODES,

BELOVED WIFE OF REV. DAVID M. RANKIN,

IN THE

TEARFUL SHADOW OF WHOSE RECENT DEATH

THESE PAGES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN,

I AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBE

This Volume,

IN THE FIRM BELIEF AND FOND HOPE

OF A HAPPY RECOGNITION :

"Where every severed wreath is bound ;
And none have heard the knell,
That smites the soul in that wild sound—
FAREWELL! BELOVED, FAREWELL!"



PREFACE.

I OFFER no apology for writing this book.

The subject may be regarded by some as vague and wholly speculative, and even as of doubtful propriety for public discussion. It has not seemed so to the author, and he inclines to the belief that few in their hearts really so regard it. In any event the topic is one of general and thrilling interest. To the writer it has become especially so. It is possible that I have been able to say but little that has not at some time been better said by others, but it has been pleasing to say even this, in my own way and under the impulse of my own feelings. The light I have gathered may be dim as the dawn, but if the flush of the morning be in it it is enough, and will serve to add, I will trust, some additional lustre to the fond hope. The effort is not so much an attempt to produce additional light upon a sub-

ject which has long been a query in the human mind, as to respond to a personal conviction of its truthfulness and to satisfy tender feelings that have come to the author's heart. The plant, whatever may be thought of its bloom, has had its roots in a somewhat chastened soul. I shall hope that the tone of this unpretentious volume will not seem presumptuous to any one, but moderate and even convincing to many. I have an earnest desire that it shall prove a message of truth to such as have, and to others who should have, their "conversation in heaven," and that it shall come as good news from a far country to any who by reason of sore bereavement are sad and lonely. I have also ventured to believe that in this material age it may stimulate thought that will divert mind and heart from the seen and temporal, and fix the soul upon the unseen and eternal.

The statements presented will be found to have their support in the endowments God has conferred upon us as rational beings, in His own word and purpose, as well as in an array of personal testimony, which by reason of the witnesses, is entitled to more than ordinary respect. Nor has it been forgotten that the present life is the one we are now living, and

that upon the fidelity in which its duties and responsibilities are discharged will depend the blessing and profit of this and all kindred themes.

Deeply conscious that I have only dealt with the edges of a great and precious truth, and with the prayer that it may bring consolation to the sorrowing, and the benediction of saving grace to all, I lay this humble tribute at the feet of Him who has brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel, and to whom we owe all that is comforting and beautiful in the thought of recognition of our friends in heaven.

ST. LOUIS, MO., November 10th, 1880.

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RECOGNITION IN HEAVEN.

CHAPTER I.

“When we hear the music ringing
In the bright celestial dome—
When sweet angels’ voices singing,
Gladly bid us welcome home
To the land of ancient story,
Where the spirit knows no care
In that land of life and glory—
Shall we know each other there?”

AMONG the many subjects that have from time to time engaged the attention of the thoughtful, and that have interwoven themselves with the tenderest affections and most touching memories of the human heart, the *probable recognition of friends in heaven* may be considered pre-eminent.

In all the ages it has nestled in the sanctuary of the heart’s love, and has been one of the sunniest hopes of the human race. Of course it has found no favor among those who have espoused that chilliest of all skepticism which denies the immortality of the soul and its blissful future. As there is nothing in grace

to discourage the investigation of this subject, and the pleasing prospect of its realization when "life's fitful fever is over," so there is nothing in infidelity to justify the hope or stimulate any method of its confirmation. Whether much or little can be said upon this topic it is only for those who have faith in a conscious future existence, and whether it shall be a theme of real comfort and instruction to these will be conditioned on their personal faith in Him who hath brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. After all it is Christ's work and presence that gives to this doctrine of recognition its beauty and blessing.

I favor no moody, disconsolate view of life; it is unwise if not wrong to covet the shadows of life, still more to attempt to blot out its sunshine, but withal such is life, and such are we, that the man is to be pitied who never thinks of heaven, and who has never at least wondered whether at last he may not meet in delightful fellowship those whom he loved, and lived, and struggled with here below.

The manifest hesitancy of many to speak upon this topic is not because the belief of it does not very generally lie in the human heart, and that it does not blend its radiance with our brightest hopes, but for other reasons which a wise prudence naturally suggests.

It is not a subject of very explicit revelation in the Word of God, and yet there is ample to rob its investigation of presumption, and to justify the belief of it. It would seem that the Holy Ghost had made sufficient allusion to it to afford us comfort and assurance, and

to forbid the need of speculation, but not enough to encourage controversy, and to give advantage to one party over another. It is no doctrine to contend about; not a suitable theme for irritable discussion. It is a subject for hearts that yearn toward heaven; it turns the sweet light of hope upon the pathway of the lonely and weary.

In addition it is plain enough that to the great mass of mankind there are subjects of far greater practical importance. So long as so many men and women, some of whom talk and think about heaven, and entertain vain hopes of passing its bright portals at last, are yet without a single qualification required by the Gospel, we may not, I am sure, with any frequency detain upon subjects like this.

Nor, on the other hand, if it be any part of God's counsel may we set it aside entirely as only visionary, speculative, and sentimental. If but one ray of the sun fall from behind the cloud in a dark day we welcome it. Because there is not a flood of light on this subject shall we reject the faint beam here and there that intimates such delightful fellowship in the future world? Really, as I come to the study of it, I am not discouraged, but rather surprised, that there is so much intimation of it in the Sacred Scriptures. It is largely inferential, it is true, but the inference is fair and natural. Nor may we set aside as unworthy of respect the warm and sober convictions of the heart on this subject, for now and again there is a sweet harmony between the feelings of the heart and the truth.

I believe it to be so here. Our whole nature revolts at the thought of our having no definite conscious knowledge of our loved ones in heaven. We can hardly conceive of the bliss and fellowship of the heavenly community without recognition. Unquestionably it is largely in the mind and heart of humanity, and where there is doubt it only needs that some dear one be translated to the skies, and the hope is at once kindled. It is love's longing; we want to believe it; and as we look away from the graves at our feet we hope it is true. How universal the response to lines like these:

"I felt that however long to me
The slumber of the grave might be,
I should know him again amid the countless throng
Who shall bear a part in the seraphim's song."

Or to these in Bickersteth's *Yesterday, To-day, and Forever*:

"I was no stranger in a strange land there,
But rather as one who, travel-worn and weary,
Weary of wandering through many climes,
At length returning homeward eyes far off
The white cliffs of his fatherland, and ere
The laboring ship touches its sacred soil
Leaps on the pier, while round him crowding press
Children, and kith, and friends, who in a breath
Ask of his welfare, and with joyous tongues
Pour all their love into his thirsty ear."

And whether we may speak with the positiveness of undoubted conviction or not, I think it no disadvan-

tage, but as profitable as it is pleasing, to rend the veil of our sorrows, or to stop in the too often thoughtless rush of life and contemplate a theme like this.

It tempers our thought with the grave; it puts wholesome restraint upon us; and how often it would light up the eye that has been tear-dimmed long enough. In the light of this truth, life is a journey, and we are going to a distant land to see our friends, and to be with them forever, for they never die there.

“That fearful foe!

Here ever bearing from us those we love,
Resistless as his power is owned below,
Has none above.”

And it is a beautiful ministry to be able to say anything that is worth saying, that will pour consolation into stricken hearts, put a permanent lustre into the hopes of the future, and in any wise lift the minds of men to that “better country” which we should all seek. If I may be able to render any such service to the hearts and lives of those who may peruse these pages I shall be grateful to Him who has given us this “good hope through grace,” and who, above all, we should delight to serve on earth and long to see in heaven.

It is proper to observe at the beginning that there are some things preparatory to an intelligent and enjoyable contemplation of this subject. It is possible that these words will come to none who do not entertain the hope of recognition. What we desire, at least those of us who look at it from the Christian stand-

point, is some confirmation for our faith. But looking at it from this finite sphere, and with our finite endowment, we must be careful not to entangle it with other truths which are more essential, and which are settled by the Word, and so embarrass the hope to which the heart clings so fondly. Moreover, we must have friends in heaven, children saved by the conditions of the covenant of grace, or others who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and we must ourselves entertain the hopes of the Gospel before the contemplation of this subject will afford real stimulus to life and joyous hope in death. If we disregard all that God has done to prepare a heaven for us and ours, and to put an eternal benediction into our future, then this is no subject for us, and it were idle to speak about it. The truth is, there is far more doubt about many getting to heaven than there is concerning the recognition of friends by those who shall attain to that blessed fellowship. I shall refer to this again, but I desire at the very beginning to announce the thought, that the shadow of its warning may be upon us all the way.

In addition we must bear in mind that our personal relationships in heaven will be very different from those which characterize our earthly state. Our present social and domestic affinities do not carry over into the future world, and go forward in the same order as here. The family is an institution of the earth and for the earth. Its present purpose and peculiar character terminate with the present life. This was clearly set forth on that occasion when the Sadducees resisted

the doctrine of the resurrection as taught by our Lord. They knew a woman who had had seven husbands, and they set this example over against the teaching of the Saviour, and asked : " Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven ? for they all had her." The Saviour replied : " Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." This language is explicit, and clearly defines that the social order of the heavenly world is very different from that which is in harmony with this present and more material life. These earthly conditions which give such charm and noble impulse to the present life will be retained in memory above ; we shall know how and what we were in them here, but in fact they shall be displaced by an order suited to our higher perfection and different sphere. We shall still love with a stronger and more sacred intensity, but not as husband and wife, not as parent and child ; that seeming selfishness and exclusiveness of love will forever have vanished, and we shall be endowed with a common affection, in itself as pure as the sublime object upon which it will be centred. It is quite probable that there will be degrees in this affection, so that those who were dearest to us here will be dearest to us there ; but our love will never more be exercised in that peculiar manner in which it is often bestowed here. Our love there will be celestial, not earthly ; it will be a holy perfection of our being, and not a condition necessitated by our

circumstances. We shall love as glorified saints, rid of all limitation; we shall love as children of the King, without any preference that could kindle a prejudice or beget envy; we shall love as God loves, and yet rejoice that here and there is one that on earth was "bone of our bone, and heart of our heart."

There is nothing in this change of conditions to interfere with the doctrine of recognition. The destruction of our relationships here is not necessarily the destruction of our knowledge concerning them, and of one another in the higher sphere. But before reference is made to any of the proofs commonly employed to sustain the doctrine of recognition, I must allude to an objection which early springs to the mind in the discussion of this subject. It is a painful objection, and we are frank to confess that it burdens the topic with some embarrassment. It is asked, if we shall recognize one another in heaven, how shall it be—what shall be our feelings respecting those of our friends who may fail to join us there? I cannot hope to give a satisfactory answer to this question. Possibly, of all the answers that have been given to it, not one is wholly satisfactory to the mind. It is bewilderment to our feeble, finite understanding, but it is no destruction of the brighter side of the argument. It remains true that saints will know each other in heaven, and that they will be perfectly happy. Let it suffice that a state of absolute perfection must imply the hearty approbation in the saints of all that constitutes such a state and of all that enters into its felicity, and

that our relation to others when we enter such a state will not be such as we sustain to them now, in our earthly sphere. And, above all, let us take well to heart the impulse rooted in this thought to urge us to constant effort and prayer for the salvation of those we love. It is here, and by this method, we shall best remove this objection. Would God that all who have any interest in this subject might look upon their children, and upon their loved companions and friends, and feel that all are included in the Saviour's sweet assurance, "I go to prepare a place for you, . . . that where I am there ye may be also."

But where shall we find any confirmation for the pleasing hope that lights up the pilgrim-way of so large a number? Faith must take precedence of reason in the discussion and acceptance of spiritual truth, yet we may affirm that it is a most *reasonable doctrine that we shall recognize our friends in heaven*. It is true that we know but little of the conditions of being in the heavenly world, aside from the facts of holiness and happiness. But with all this we may determine whether there is any harmony between this truth and enlightened reason. Reason alone cannot establish the doctrine of recognition; its conclusions are not final with respect to any spiritual truth; but considering the doctrine we may determine whether or not it seems reasonable that we should believe it. At once it is plain that a truth that is in itself so pure, so identified with all our noblest feelings and brightest hopes, and

so in harmony with God's purpose and with all plain revelation on the higher and final sphere of existence, is not unreasonable. Human happiness is largely dependent upon human fellowship; God has provided for this necessity both in the nature He has given us and in the relationship which He has appointed, and if we can be perfectly happy in heaven in the absence of recognition, it is in violation of the present order, and incomprehensible to us. And surely it is not to be thought a thing in conflict with the holiness and higher order of the heavenly world, that we should recognize those whom we loved on earth. Indeed, it seems to us that any disposition to disbelieve this truth is far more unreasonable than the belief of it. There may be difficulties in the way that seem serious, objections that trouble the conscience, but for the most part does not a belief of it argue a better heart and a purer hope than a disbelief of it. It is true we shall rise up at last in a glorified spiritual body, but shall we lose our identity, or is it reasonable to suppose that in our glorified being, free from all soil and rid of every limitation, we shall know less than we do in our present very moderate state? Certainly our faculties will lose nothing in their higher promotion and untrammelled liberty. If grace on earth sanctifies and gives a wider scope to human affections and friendship, and makes acquaintance with one another not only a means of promoting our earthly interests, but also a revelation of the noble within us, will grace do less for us in glory? Rather is it not quite reasonable to suppose

that acquaintanceship will simply be carried up to a higher perfection in heaven, and be made the happy means of higher ends, so that there we will certainly illustrate perfectly what the Apostle asks but is not always secured here: "Let love be without dissimulation." It seems reasonable that the whole sublime function of love is in no small part dependent, so far as our relation to one another is concerned, on the fact of recognition, and of a fellowship which is meaningless without it.

But suppose we deny this doctrine, what is the result? What a shadow it puts upon the sheen of our hopes, and what violence it does to the almost universal thought and hope of mankind respecting the future. That God could make us happy without any such distinct recognition may not be questioned by us, but with the faculties we possess, and with such knowledge of His purpose concerning us as He has been pleased to disclose to us, is it quite reasonable to suppose that He will do so? Besides, if there are difficulties in the way of arbitrary statement on this doctrine, are not the difficulties that attend its denial still greater? If personal acquaintance ends with the grave, then, in a sense that now thrills us with delight, as our faith and hope anticipate the future, we are done with our loved ones forever when we bury them, and we must enter heaven as travellers enter a strange land, unknown and without power to distinguish others in any such distinct way as love would suggest to me, that robs heaven of much of the great-heart sympathy, and of much of the

home idea which I have always been pleased to associate with it. All this is unreasonable to me, and I am happier and better in the fond hope that it shall be otherwise. Is it quite reasonable to suppose that so beautiful a hope, which in all the ages has been the common heritage of humanity, should be without any foundation? What matters it that it has sometimes been called in question? Is there any subject of human thought and faith that has not been denied? It is reasonable to presume that the universality of the acceptance of this truth entitles it to our respect, and establishes it at least as probably true. Another has justly said: "As beliefs always imply supposed reasons competent to produce them; a universal belief would seem to imply a universal and strong ground in its favor; or at least it must show so much that it is not esteemed repugnant to common reason."

And this conviction is strengthened in the fact that there is a want, a craving in our nature that finds satisfaction in this doctrine. We really, and from commendable motives, desire it; we sometimes long for the realization of the hope; we feel it must be true. Here, very largely, the hope first puts its roots, and then blooms into faith. Is it irrational? Rather is it not in harmony with all analogies that this longing should be met, as God has ordained that the craving for food should be met by the response of that which is desired. And who will take it upon him to say, that what is hidden from sense, and what may even transcend reason, may not be disclosed somehow to the

inner sense, to consciousness? No, from the standpoint of reason, it does not seem to me that heaven is a lonely island; not a vast metropolis crowded with strangers; it is a city of saintly companions; it is a home of loving familiar friends. When the tired feet of the little child, or of the aged Christian, or of any weary pilgrim whose steps have been toward the golden gate, cross its threshold, there will be some familiar voice and face to greet them, and a more brilliant retinue than ever attended kings; methinks, these who were known and loved on earth, will hasten to present the newcomer to the saints of the ages, and to Him, unto whom they will speedily pay their tribute of love and song. Be comforted, then, you in whose history the strongest loves and the dearest hopes of life have been sundered and crushed by the relentless hand of death; those withered hopes have already revived and shine in a sublimer transfiguration. Your departed ones have only gone up higher in the scale of goodness and being. If you and your loved departed are one in Christ, a sweeter fellowship awaits you than you ever knew here below.

It were remarkable, do you not think so, if amid that great throng who have been redeemed and taken from the earth, and to whose just spirits we are to come by and by, we should see none whom we knew and loved here. Shall we walk the golden streets and never light upon one of those? Shall we hear some sweet song learned in the earthly pilgrimage, and now trilled by some clear ringing voice, and never recognize the

tone and sentiment? The very communion of the saints on earth, the blessed and intimate relation between the saints on earth and in heaven, the deepest and best feelings of our nature, all give reasonable assurance that we shall know our friends in heaven. I must say of this doctrine of Recognition what Socrates said of the doctrine of the soul's immortality just before he drank the fatal hemlock : " That this, or something like this, is the destiny of souls, appears to me a reasonable belief, a belief on which one may fairly rest his hopes."

But a second argument commonly employed in support of this doctrine is *the continuance of Memory in the other world*.

That death should quench the memory of all we have known and experienced here is clearly a contradiction of the nature of the soul, and of the teaching of God's Word.

Memory is not a member of the body, but a faculty of the soul, and as such must partake of its immortality.

And when the soul, rid of its material burden, rises into the ecstasies and perfections of the better world, will consciousness be less than now? Will all that has been written by the finger of love on the sensitive tablets of memory be forever effaced, and the sweet face of that child you last saw nestled among the flowers, but cold and pale, or of that mother, wife, husband, or friend, whom God summoned home before you, never be recognized again? Why, if this be true, we shall not even

know in heaven what grace made us, nor when and where the soul mounted up as on eagles' wings into the beatitudes of God.

I shall not attempt to be metaphysical here, and show the perpetuation of memory by the manner in which its laws and operations are identified with being itself. Let it suffice to say that if all memory of the past be cut off at death, then, in the future we must begin existence as if we never had been before, and this would complicate the problem of life, and put quite as much mystery into the past as into the future. In addition, and more important than all, if memory does not survive, we must abandon the idea that the future life is but a continuation, and for the Christian, the sublime culmination of this.

But it is plain that memory is necessary to the preservation of our very identity, and hence as a distinct faculty, and with all its treasure, good or bad, sad or glad, it must carry over into the world to come. Christ did not come to destroy our nature. He came to destroy sin and to perfect our nature, and I am sure that these faculties of our souls will not only not be destroyed hereafter, but they will be greatly intensified, and we shall remember all the way in which God has led us; we shall remember those with whom we took sweet counsel, and with whom we walked to and sat in the house of God; we shall remember where and when God "made the place of his feet glorious," and how the glory of the Redeemer in the transfiguration of worship or of a triumphant death shone in the face of

the saint we loved. Those bright ones who are faultless before the throne have not forgotten the world in which their Saviour bought them with His blood, nor the way in which they ascended to bliss, nor those they loved and prayed with on earth. Every impression that shapes character below is remembered above.

Kindly words that comforted and cheered weary hearts in time are woven into the undying strains of heaven's music, and they will not die. Sever the memory of our struggles and growth below from the sense of our enjoyment above, and we should constitute an entirely new order of beings. But this cannot be. There is only one redeemed community; the saints on earth, along with the saints in heaven, constitute the blood-washed company; both have their names written in heaven; they are two folds of one flock, with one Good Shepherd; one part yet remains in the body, and the other part has joined the general assembly of the church of the first-born.

“One army of the living God,
To His command we bow;
Part of the host has crossed the flood,
And part is crossing now.”

I have no thought that every individual memory in the better world is an absolute blank. “No! Memory is a picture gallery, in which dear images remain imperishable on earth, and these images will not be effaced in heaven till displaced by the loved, not lost, originals.”

But we need not be content with these statements. Memory is so strangely interwoven with our moral being, and with our happiness and moral relationship in this world and in the next, that it is not to be wondered at that the Scriptures give distinct intimation on this part of the subject. And it cannot be helped if they present a dark as well as a bright side. If men do not wish to carry the memory of evil over into the eternal world, a gracious way has been provided to turn the course of human life, and to strike from the soul the guilt and woe of sin, and fill it with heavenly ministries and memories. Let men know that they are fairly warned, and that nothing in God's universe can change His own law of compensation: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If we obstinately and persistently sow a bad memory here, a bad memory will be the result in eternity, and, involving the reproach of all the quickened faculties of the soul, it will be hell enough for the man who is its victim. The very idea of rewards and punishments in the future implies memory. The relations of this life, of this probationary existence, of this season of offered grace to the future, are declared in God's purpose and word to be recognized in the future world. Judgment demands memory, and, saved or unsaved, it will be far from sluggish on that day. Paul says: "Every one shall give account of himself to God." "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,

who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham says to Dives: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Here is a distinct act of memory, and not less vivid is his consciousness of the unhappy condition of his brethren on earth, whom he does not wish to see in the same sad plight and place with himself; all of which is significant in its relation to the doctrine of future recognition. That thrilling judgment scene, presented in such graphic detail by our Lord in the 25th chapter of Matthew, and so swept by the storm of merited condemnation on the one side, and so bright with God's smile and glory on the other, is an undoubted statement of the continuance and exercise of memory in the future. The record it has made here, especially in our relation to God and his gracious interposition, is there unfolded to the joy of the saved and to the confusion and despair of the lost. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these ye did it not to me. . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Whether we speak of the saved or the lost, each will understand the justness of his

final destiny, and gladly or sadly remember how it was wrought out here on earth.

And what a tribute to the immortality of memory the seer of Patmos pays in these words: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. 6: 9, 10. Then the martyrs have not forgotten the bloody tribulation through which they passed to the white robe and the victor's palm. And if we shall remember in the spheres of thought and action, I am sure we shall not forget in the spheres of vision and blessed fellowship. No, dear reader, our very rational organism forbids the thought that we shall be launched into eternity without the power to remember, and therefore recognize, those who were identified with our highest ministries, our purest joys, and our noblest life.

Memory and recognition are both implied in the great doctrine of resurrection, for it is a resurrection of individuals, and in the fact that it is this mortal that is to put on immortality. It is implied in the fact that heaven is a vast and happy community, and that we do not throw off the nature or character we possess, but are only sublimely promoted in them.

You have departed loved ones; they have died in the Lord. If the thought that you should not know and come to their fellowship in heaven has cost you a pang abandon it, for it is contrary to reason, contrary

to the conditions of immortal mind, and to the word of God. Poetry is often fanciful, and oftener sentimental, but I think these lines a truthful description of the experience of the one just passing the bright portals:

“Another son of Adam’s race, through Jesus’ loving might,
Hath crossed the waste, hath reached the goal, hath van-
quished in the fight.

Hail, brother, hail! we welcome thee! join in our sweet ac-
cord!

Lift up the burden of our song—salvation to the Lord!

“And now from out the glory, the living cloud of light,
The old familiar faces come beaming on his sight;
The early lost, the early loved, the friends of long ago,
Companions of his conflicts and pilgrimage below.

“They parted here in weakness, and suffering, and gloom;
They meet amid the freshness of heaven’s immortal bloom;
Henceforth, in ever-enduring bliss, to wander hand in hand
Beside the living waters of the still and sinless land.”

The anticipation is blessed, full of impulse to better living, and a source of unspeakable comfort for all whose way has been darkened, and whose lives have been hushed into lonely quiet by death. A beam of light from the infinite mercy, I am pleased to throw it across the path of any such an one, and to let it fall on the graves of the bereaved, or on the dying bed of the timid. Oh, ye that sorrow, not without hope, think not all the while of those who have been taken from you, but of the glory that in this doctrine is to be revealed in them and you when the triumphs of grace have culminated.

“ Oh, who can tell the rapture of those to whom ’tis given
Thus to renew the bonds of earth amid the bliss of heaven?
Thrice blessed be His holy name, who, for our fallen race,
Hath purchased by His bitter pains such plenitude of grace.”

But perchance the eye of some one will fall on these pages who has loved ones in heaven, and he may read them with tearful longing and yet have no hope or title to that blessed inheritance. It may be, on that bright sunny shore a dear child, a sainted mother, a pious wife, or friend, now chants the song of redeeming love, and betimes, in your loneliness, you long to see them, and wonder whether you will ever come together again. Well, it will be no fault of a merciful God if you do not. The provisions of grace are not limited: “ Who-soever will, may come.” “ Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” As you read, the invitation comes to you, and how tender and strong the appeal to your soul in the memory of those who have ascended to the skies! You need not mistake in so solemn and important a matter. The conditions of grace here and of glory hereafter are stated with great earnestness and plainness: “ He that believeth shall be saved.” “ And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” No man may pass the golden gates tramping under foot the blood of the covenant, or soiled with unrepented and unforgiven sin, but washed in that blood which cleanseth from all sin he may go in; you may, dear reader, not only to greet those

who have gone before you, but, better than all, to be greeted by Him who hath loved you and given Himself for you. First accept Christ as your own personal Saviour, have Him formed within you the hope of glory, and then joyfully contemplate a meeting by and by with the sainted ones. The thought of recognition has no charm apart from union now and everlasting fellowship hereafter with Christ. In your thought, and love, and hope, He must be crowned Lord of all, and in all your tempers and moods, in all your life and hope, in your death and entrance beyond, He must be your supreme delight, and then this doctrine will prove a shrine of comfort and blessing. As you think of the friends beyond may the sentiment of these lines breathe the loving prayer of your heart :

“ Yes, Lord Jesus, I will love Thee,
In my gladness, in my grief;
From Thy service nought shall move me;
I will serve Thee all my life,—
Ever to Thy voice replying,
Ready when death comes to me,
For the soul may welcome dying
Whose humble trust is fixed on Thee.

“ Lord, be near, my soul to strengthen,
As my day on earth goes on,
Till the evening shadows lengthen
And the night is coming down.
Then, Thy gracious hands extending,
In the fulness of Thy love,
Whisper, ‘ Child, this life is ending,
Come and rest with Me above.’ ”

CHAPTER II.

“When the holy angels meet us,
As we go to join their band,
Shall we know the friends that greet us
In that glorious spirit-land?
Shall we see the same eyes shining
On us, as in days of yore?
Shall we feel the dear arms twining
Fondly round us, as before?”

It is when we are in need that we best know the value of a friend; it is when the loneliness of their absence oppresses us that we most appreciate our loved ones; and so there are tender portions of God's word and themes that touch us in our deepest afflictions and dearest relations, that we can best understand and most correctly estimate when we look at them through the tears of some bereavement or other affliction that enables us to realize that “the things which are seen are temporal.” The flower gives out its aroma most freely after it is crushed; the alabaster box of precious ointment was broken before its fragrance filled the room, and so the heart is never so truthful an interpreter of much that is written for our comfort as when it bleeds over some withered hope. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee,” is a beautiful Scripture, full of sweet promise and lofty

privilege. How nearly and how tenderly it brings the finite and infinite together. But what cares he about it whose mind is at ease, and whose heart has never wearied under corroding care nor wept over the pale, still form whose removal has left such a scar on the soul and such a gloomy blank in the life? Let the shadow of death fall on the hearthstone, and the vacant chair suggest only the form and memory of the life that has been quenched, and what a different and tender meaning such Scriptures as these take on: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Or this, which Byron could never hear recited without the tears filling his eyes: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." To the devout soul, to the soul that lives by faith and not by sight, the Bible has never radiated a brighter glory, nor beamed with the smile of a fuller promise than when the windows of the home have been darkened and the heart has gone weeping to the shrine where God reveals himself as between the cherubim. He can preach best on the words, "Deep calleth unto deep; at the noise of thy waterspouts all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me," who has himself been in the flood.

And like one looking longingly from a foreign shore towards his native land where his friends abide,

he will have the largest sympathy with this truth who has loved friends on the other side. And thus it has happened to the writer since the writing of these pages began. A dear sister, next to myself in the order of the family, a devoted wife and mother, and to whom I bade good-by but a few weeks since, has gone to be with Christ, which is far better. I left her well and happy, not in her own but in her paternal home; and there where she spent her sunny childhood, there amid sweet and hallowed memories, there away from her dear children, God came and gave His beloved sleep. Of her own household a part crossed the flood before her, and she has met and recognized them ere this. And concerning these lambs who wearied early and laid them down to rest, Mr. Bickersteth expresses the mother's experience in these beautiful lines:

“One look sufficed to tell me they were mine,
My babes, my blossoms, my long-parted ones;
The same in feature and in form as when
I bent over their dying pillow last,
Only the spirit now disenrobed of flesh,
And beaming with the likeness of their Lord.”

From amid these shadows I contemplate this subject with the spell of a new charm upon me. I have now a profounder interest in it, and brighter than ever this bow of promise beams from the sacred page, and throws its light not only on the grave still wet with the tears of stricken love, but into the very loved face now gone from sight but beautiful to the vision of

faith as it radiates the splendor of holy transfiguration. With the grief of such a providence on two homes and many hearts, may I not say with a new emphasis as we advance: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Jno. 6: 68.

In this chapter we propose to examine the Scripture argument on this subject: "To the law and to the testimony." The final settlement of all questions pertaining to our salvation and destiny, both in this and in the future life, must be brought to this test. But we may not set all Scripture aside that does not plainly state the doctrine. There are many passages in the Word of God that have a hidden meaning which can only be brought out by comparison with other Scriptures, and by the discovery of the relation they sustain to other truths not directly taught by them. If we ignore the doctrine because of the lack of explicit statement, then there is much else that we ardently believe, and have even incorporated with our creeds, that upon the same principle must be abandoned. There is a progress in the development of this doctrine in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament we have only sufficient intimation of the heavenly existence to reveal the dim dawn of recognition, but as we advance the light increases, until in the Apocalypse we have the perfect day, not in the redeemed man, lost and lonely, but in a redeemed society for whom a city has been prepared, "a city which is compact together." If there be but a meagre revelation on this subject which may be regarded conclusive, there is a chiming

of truth which yields no other inference, and in addition the whole plan and spirit of the Scriptures seem to justify the belief of saintly recognition in heaven. If recognition beyond were a fundamental doctrine, I am sure it would be set forth with all distinctness; but it is not, and there doubtless is wisdom in leaving it just as it is, with here and there an intimation, like the dim dawn that heralds the coming sun. There is not enough to challenge a devotion that might be better employed, and yet there is ample to produce a wholesome restraint and allow souls to foster the fond hope without presumption. In the Scriptures bearing upon this doctrine in the Old Testament I shall refer to those commonly brought forward in its defence, adding some additional in the New Testament which, in my judgment, support the hope. In the patriarchal age men looked upon life as a pilgrimage. They did not talk about dying as we do, but when the end came they were "gathered unto their fathers" or "unto their people." Now mark these beautiful expressions. How distinctly they set forward the idea of a holy and delightful fellowship. It was the method of announcing a man's death. He had gone to his own, and how strong, and reasonable, and beautiful the intimation that he felt he would be greeted by those who had gone before him.

Abraham was not buried "in any of the sepulchres of his people," but it was said of him, when he lay down to die, that he was "gathered unto his fathers."

The very same expression was applied to Isaac, not

after, but before his burial, clearly indicating that his liberated spirit had gone to join, in conscious reunion, those who had preceded him. And of Joseph it is said he "yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." Of all these we have the fitting culmination in Moses. In Deuteronomy we read: "Get thee up and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people." "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Borne away by the angels we know not where, but his great, grand soul went up to join the general assembly of the church of the first-born; and when the glory of the transfiguration came down from God out of heaven, more than a thousand years afterwards, Moses was there, and was recognized; and I have no thought that for these long centuries the ransomed have been singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, without recognizing God's servant whom he has been pleased to put into such distinguished fellowship. On this particular Scripture, "gathered unto his people," etc., a writer observes: "The most distinguished of modern and Hebrew scholars—the celebrated Gesenius—after a minute critical investigation of the original expression, declares that the phrase 'being gathered to one's people or fathers' is expressly distinguished by the Hebrew writers both from death and burial, and signifies the spirit's departing into Sheol or Hades, where the Hebrews supposed all their ancestors to be congregated."

And was not the same thought prominent in the

mind and heart of Jacob when, stricken at the loss of Joseph, he mourned for him as for one dead, and said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning?"

He had no expectation of lying by his side when his troublous pilgrimage was over, for, in his mind, the wild beasts had torn him ; but he did hope to join him in the experience of his immortality, and to share then, unmolested, his fellowship.

By the side of these Scriptures in the Old Testament, the herald twilight of a brighter morning yet to come, put some of those rapt utterances of our Lord in the Gospel of John, such as, "I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." And again, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Between those and these is there not a beautiful harmony, and do not the latter confirm the intimation of conscious and blessed fellowship indicated by the former? There is a society in heaven, of which we shall have occasion to speak again, and in it, in the brighter revelation of the New Testament, the names of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, the representatives of the good and true of their time, are expressly mentioned ; and shall we be unconscious of their persons and presence when the perfection of redeemed mankind is attained? Shall we sit down with these noble souls, of whom the world was not worthy, and who stand out

in the mighty purpose of God like the towering peaks of a mountain range; shall we celebrate in grateful ascriptions to Moses and the Lamb, the triumphs of Redemption, and not be really and happily conscious of our associates? Such a thought, at least to our finite minds, puts confusion into the sublime order of God's word and plan. Another passage is that which discloses the grief of David over the death of his child. When the rush of his grief was past, he found a solace in this thought: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." 2 Samuel 12: 23. He certainly did not mean that he should go to a something, nor yet to some one whom he would not know and love in a specific way. The grief that has come to him is very bitter, for the king knows that there is a sting of retribution in it, and he would be utterly broken-hearted but for the sweet hope that nestles in his heart that he shall join his child and share his companionship by and by. It was not any association with his emaciated body to which he had reference, for there it lay pale and cold before him, but it was the conscious immortal part that had forsaken the shattered tenement now crumbling to dust. "I shall go to *him*," I shall meet *him*, and call him by name, and sit and talk with him in that world where tears are never shed and friends are never parted. Is it not the hope that at once blooms in the soul to light up the sadness of those who, through the conditions of grace, look onward where the light is undimmed by a cloud, to the meeting of their loved departed? Has not many a pious father

and mother stood over the angel babe, or the promising son or daughter that had fallen early under the common blight, and as hope kindled afresh under its baptism of sorrow, uttered these words, "I shall go to him—to her?" If there be no response from the dead there is a response of the soul to this truth, and the thought that predominates is that of recognition.

Another, in speaking of the passage, says: "When he uttered the words, 'I shall go to him,' may he not have done so under the promptings of the Spirit of inspiration, who, through him, would thus convey such a lesson of instruction to all succeeding generations of the Church as would prove particularly consolatory to the faithful when suffering from the decease of Christian friends, and be more especially soothing to the hearts of pious parents when called on, like the Psalmist, to transfer to the heavenly guardianship of the chief Shepherd one or more of the lambs of his earthly flock? Thus, through David, the Spirit would be telling them that those friends in Christ for whom they mourned—whether the sheep of his pasture or the lambs of his fold—were not destroyed, but merely removed to another and better part of the Lord's possessions, where after 'a little season,' they, themselves, would be permitted to rejoin them and partake with them in a joy which will be without mixture and without end."

No, we cannot have the lambs that have been taken from our fold return to us, but if we are converted, becoming like them, we may join and know them in

heaven. Heaven is theirs, and both they and the Saviour invite us to enter. An old epitaph expresses the thought :

“ Weep not, my mother, weep not, I am blest,
But must leave heaven if I come to thee ;
For I am where the weary are at rest,
And sinners cease from troubling,—*Come to me !*”

But our Lord has brought all that pertains to life and immortality more fully to light in the Gospel, and we now turn to the New Testament to find the brighter day of that precious revelation of which we have the flushed morning in the Old.

In the transfiguration scene as recorded by Luke, after Jesus had prayed, and his face and garments had taken on the sheen of heaven, it is said: “ And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Observe that it is said of these men that they appeared in glory, but not without form, and yet not in the dull dress of our mortal flesh, and they conversed about an earthly transaction ; and Peter, and James, and John, the favored three, beheld Christ’s glory, until Peter, caught up in the ecstasy of it, and in recognition of these heavenly visitants, exclaimed : “ Master, it is good for us to be here ; let us make three tabernacles ; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias, not knowing what he said.”

Moses had ascended from the mount, and the angels

had carried him to his secret burial fifteen hundred years before, and hundreds of years after that strange departure Elijah was born, and finally, like Enoch, he was translated, and now who as much as dreams, as they are beheld in such dazzling and unearthly fellowship, that they were ignorant of each other's persons and presence. Did that splendid scene turn the portals of glory aside and give to us some vision of the "excellent glory" as we ourselves stand related to it? Was it not "heaven opened" sufficiently to the heart and thought of mankind to teach them that departed men still live as such, that death does not destroy their individuality, and through their mutual fellowship their interest in Christ's work is magnified?

Is it not an illustration of the beauty and excellency of Christianity, which in light, even here inaccessible to the profane and worldly, reveals the character and existence of the departed good? We are left in no sad doubt on the subject. It opens the gates of light, and kindly reveals to the longing gaze of those who at the fall of every twilight count it no calamity that they are a day's march nearer home, "the great multitude which no man can number." It is only honest to say that we know little of that bright beyond, imaged with such splendor in the Transfiguration, but not because we may know nothing, but because of the purity and immensity of what is to be known. Every man's life and experience become a revelation of heaven as they are here transformed into its image. And in this scene a mutual communion between the earthly and

the heavenly is indicated. We have no power certainly to commune with spirits as we ordinarily commune with one another. Modern spiritualism, or spiritism, is a weird, horrid doctrine, full of sham and hypocrisy, and without foundation either in reason or in the Scriptures. The blessed Bible does not indulge in gossip about the better world, and when it opens the radiant portals of glory it is not that angels may tell secrets about persons and fortunes in the spiritual sphere, but that God may disclose himself more really to souls, breathe more of his grace, and put a bright light on the darkness of the world. We may have communion with the spiritual world, and with the very heart of it; but it is not by any such nonsense as rapping and table-moving. It is when we are so possessed with Christ and spiritual truth as was Peter at the Transfiguration. We degrade communion with the departed when it is thought of by any other method than by our own spiritual exaltation.

“How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold,
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour’s communion with the dead.

“In vain shalt thou or any call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.”

And is it not plain that those glorified ones, who have thrown off the limitations that hamper us, know

much of the present? What profound interest Moses and Elias in this mountain scene manifested in the Church! What does the Apostle mean when he admonishes us by the fact that "we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses?" Who are these that soar away from the heavenly world in holy ministration?

Dean Alvord, in his Greek Testament, observes on this passage: "The words must be taken as distinctly so far implying community between the Church triumphant and the Church below, so that they who have entered into the heavenly rest are conscious of what passes among ourselves." So, then, this thrilling couplet of the poet is not all sentiment:

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen both when we wake and when we sleep."

And now, if they know so much about us, about the Church, about the great conquest of the cross, can it be that they are strangers to one another? And if Peter, James, and John, by the transfiguration of their own souls into higher spiritual conditions, recognized Moses and Elias in this earthly coronation of their Lord, will they be unable to do the same when they are faultless before the throne? Does not the blessed hope of recognition imply it, and will it not be accomplished by that celestial excellence which is to characterize the glorified body?

One of the most touching incidents in the life of Christ, and one of the tenderest illustrations of his

great heart sympathy, was his raising the son of the widow of Nain. He was an only son, and his mother a widow. He bade her dry her tears, and commanded the young man to arise: "And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." Luke 7:11-16. Was not this some prefiguration of what Jesus will do on the morning of the resurrection? Oh, then what a delivering up to the long bereft there will be! Resurrection means also restoration, and why should we put so much emphasis on the fact that the heavenly world will be without sickness and sorrow, parting and death, if not for the conscious fellowship that awaits us there? Death blots out the peculiar relationship, but will it quench our love and fellowship? Will it make us cold strangers, our hands unclasped, and our lips sealed forevermore to all we once were and loved? No; everything noble and aspiring in us forbids the thought. I rather believe that there will be a glad conscious greeting, as when one returns from war, or from a long journey. Ah, when grace shall have at last brought us to the golden threshold, what a welcome the angels will give us, and how eager they will be to tell us of what awaits us in the cloudless glory. The poet when he was farthest from the earth in his meditations caught the thought:

"Welcome to heaven, dear brother, welcome home,
Welcome to thy inheritance of light!
Welcome forever to thy Master's joy!
Thy work is done; thy pilgrimage is past;

Thy guardian angel's vigil is fulfilled ;
 Thy parents wait thee in the bowers of bliss ;
 Thy infant babes have woven wreaths for thee ;
 Thy brethren who have entered into rest
 Long for thy coming, and the angel choirs
 Are ready with their symphonies of praise."

And is not this in keeping with the description of our Lord, both of the judgment and of the heavenly world? He speaks of "gathering his own together." Mark 13 : 27. He tells us that we shall "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God." Matt. 8 : 11 ; Luke 13 : 28-29. And again, in Luke 22 : 30, how beautiful his words, how fraught with hope, and how charged with a conscious fellowship : "Ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." And who that has ever thought of heaven, or rested in the hope of its blessedness when weary or sad, has not thought of our Lord's words in John's Gospel, uttered when he was already walking in the shadow of death, and but a step from the brightening beams of resurrection glory.

"In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." John 14 : 1-3. Mark the personality of his language; the retention of identity, and the joy of conscious fellowship. Consider the whole spirit and aim of these Scriptures, and is there not in all of them a strong hint of recognition, as if the Holy Ghost regarded a truth so inwoven with our redeemed humanity

as certainly true, and not requiring more explicit statement? Deny the doctrine, and you must violate the tenderness and beauty of these Scriptures, and put a chilly veil between spirits that were kindred by nature and grace on earth, and the bright glory of the Christian's heaven is sullied by the grim shadow of selfishness. In all these Scriptures and many others, it will be noticed there is a recognition of the social element in man's nature. Neither on earth nor in heaven does it seem to be God's order for man to be alone. The desire for fellowship, for personal communion and association, has often been made a victim, but is not a result, of the fall; it is a gift of God, and characterizes the highest order of being. And surely this love of companionship will not be struck from our being in that world where God and the angels are the beautiful and constant illustrations of it. Oh, can it be that that cruel, selfish misery,—no fond, sympathetic, elevating communion,—which has so often made this world cold and cheerless to many a weary heart, shall destroy one of our most delightful thoughts, and brightest hopes of heaven? No, the thought offends the better angels of our nature, and seems a reproach upon Him who when on earth sanctified homes with His presence, and now waits to greet His own at the jubilee supper. Upon these and other passages the Church has long since founded the hope of recognition, and accorded to it the dignity of a doctrine. It is a sublime thought that we shall meet in that higher fellowship, stripped of all that mars present communion; but why should

we attribute less to sovereign grace, since it so sweetly blends hearts and lives here? And what strength of argument the thought gathers in the impulse it provides to make men seek after the image of Christ, and what a flood of substantial comfort it should pour upon the lonely stricken heart, whose hopes, like withered leaves in autumn, have been torn from the object on which they fastened and have fallen into the grave, but only to take on brighter hues and a permanent reality in that world where there is neither blight nor blot.

There is a remarkable passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which clearly sets forth the idea that the future state is a self-conscious state. "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13: 12. The passage teaches that God knows us thoroughly, and that as He knows us we shall know. There is not to be less of consciousness, but more. I am sure we shall know ourselves better than ever, and shall we be ignorant of our friends? Knowledge is just as much a characteristic of the future state as ignorance is of this. It might be very pleasing for the hopeless man to believe that when he is thrust beyond the veil and must confront eternity he shall lose all memory of the past and drop into eternal forgetfulness or annihilation; but man's own nature brands such a thought as absurd, and the Word of God positively denies it. We shall not only know, but we shall even know our character, our destiny, as the Infinite knows them; and this whether good or bad, saved or lost. For the Christian the thought thrills

with delight, but for the man of no faith, and of no spiritual apprehension and hope, it is fearful enough, and must constitute one of the most bitter ingredients in the cup of his woe. Dr. Shedd, in speaking on this Scripture, says: "Shall I think, shall I feel, shall I know?" "In answering this question in the affirmative, without any hesitation or ambiguity, the Apostle Paul has in reality cleared up most of the darkness that overhangs the future state. The structure of the spiritual body and the fabric of the immaterial world are matters of secondary importance, and may be left without explanation, provided only the rational mind of man be distinctly informed that it shall not sleep in unconsciousness, and that the immortal spark shall not become such stuff as dreams are made of." Clearly we are taught that we shall know, and so far as our persons are concerned the measure of our capacity in knowledge shall be the measure of God's capacity. And this is the mystery which human nature has long desired to have solved, "Shall I know beyond?" The Apostle's answer is conclusive, and it must be important, for this answer contains for all mankind the very substance of heaven or hell. And knowing so much of self and destiny, shall we not know one another? If there be this keen sense of knowledge with respect to moral conduct and condition, will there be ignorance of persons and no identity? Will we fail to recognize those who stand by our side, and some of whom we must know we either helped toward or hindered from reaching heaven? This passage alone

would seem to settle the whole question and leave no room for doubt whatever. The more I study this delightful subject the more does a belief of it seem to me not only consistent with all the noble elements and aspirations of our nature, but as well with all God's most gracious interposition in our behalf, and I cannot see how the hope in those who are truly Christians can fail to take on the vigor and assurance of a positive faith, and so enable them to see in it that one pearl of which heaven's gate is made, and to hear in it the melody of that joy and praise which rises and rolls there forever and ever.

There is a beautiful Scripture in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, which has been used in support of the doctrine of recognition. He is speaking to those to whom he ministered in the Gospel: "Ye have acknowledged that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." 2 Cor. 1:14. This passage has its parallel in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The Apostle having in mind the trials of the ministry, which he experienced as few do now, and then looking upon those who have been saved and comforted through his instrumentality, says: "For what is our *hope*, or *joy*, or *crown* of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thess. 2:19, 20. Paul has a pleasing prospect before him; he will remember the pastoral relation in that world where the blast of persecution cannot strike him; his heaven, his eternity will be brightened by

those of whose presence he shall be conscious, and who shall rise up to call him blessed, giving him renewed and constant occasion to bring tributes of praise to the feet of his Lord, and then will he realize more than here how unworthy of mention were all his earthly trials, now swallowed up by the glory revealed in him. Who shall tell his joy as the ages roll away, and he continues to be greeted by his children and fellow-laborers in the Gospel? What a great company has already gathered about him! how radiant in their spotless robes! how triumphant as they shout and wave their palms! and, following the lead of that illustrious saint, in what unison and rapture they cast their crowns at the feet once pierced and blood-soiled, but now healed, and "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace!" And does not the Apostle most plainly root the "hope," and "joy," and "crown of rejoicing," of which he speaks, in the fact of recognition? Does he not mean to say that he shall meet and know the saints in the perfect state, and that he is more than content to wait and endure until the coming King shall bring them into that conscious fellowship so splendidly symbolized in the meeting of Moses and Elias with their Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration?

The same thought is presented in the Apocalypse. There is recognition of different peoples redeemed by Christ, and who through bloody dust and ways of toil and tribulation have reached the celestial city.

And what a greeting that will be when God's min-

isters and the children of the covenant come together, and standing faultless before the throne chime their voices in the shout of redeeming love! Ah, then, many an obscure but faithful servant of Christ, who had no fame and less appreciation than he deserved, will find his heart leap for joy, as to his glad surprise he recognizes this and that trophy of his ministry, and learns, what it was difficult for him sometimes to believe on earth, that his labor of love was not in vain in the Lord.

Mr. Bickersteth makes beautiful allusion to the thought in his poem in these words:

“In amaze

I asked what meant such gratulation there,
 And one of many answered: ‘From thy mouth
 We heard of Jesus’ love, and thine the hand
 That led us to his feet.’ It was enough;
 For all the Parent and the Pastor woke
 Within me; all the holy memories
 Of bygone days flowed in a refluent tide
 Over my soul once more. Some I had known
 From rosy dawn of childhood.
 Some I had shepherded, yea, many. And
 Some in after years had poured the burden
 Of a wounded spirit into mine.
 And others, dying, heard me read of him
 Who on the cross for mercy cried to Christ,
 Heard, and themselves believed. All these I knew,
 And quick as light their story flashed on me.
 But in that group of filial spirits ~~came~~
 Many I knew not—*part of that great store*
Of unsuspected treasure heaven conceals.
 And they too poured on me beatitudes.”

Does it not seem that there has been too much taking it for granted that the Scriptures teach nothing on this subject and not enough of prayerful study to catch the bright glimpses, sometimes beaming with beautiful distinctness from the sacred page, and sometimes partly concealed amid the folds of its heavenly drape-ry? I am pleased to know, and to tell the sad and lonely everywhere, that faith in the doctrine of recognition is not inconsistent with either duty or belief, and that the accumulated light of God's Word is no faint imperceptible ray, but a burst of glory that will one day dazzle the eyes that now only see it through a glass darkly. But turn to another passage in the Apostle's epistle to the Thessalonians: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." And farther on he says: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Paul is speaking for the consolation of such as have been bereaved. He tells them that there is hope in their sorrow, and that their departed ones shall be gathered to Him in whom they now sleep, and that all together they shall "ever be with the Lord."

The plain teaching of the passage is reunion, fellowship, recognition. And so the great thought goes on accumulating until in the majestic splendors of the Apocalypse the seer not only sees, but distinguishes those

who were redeemed from the earth. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed with white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple." Rev. 7: 9-15.

This is the society of the redeemed, recognized by the elder as distinct from the angels, and joined together in the glad ministries of their heavenly home. And shall these know their Lord, know their blessed duties and privileges, know whence they came, and through what agony of a Saviour's cross, and what trial of personal conflict and pain, and not know one another?

Reason joins the best of us in heart and life to repel the thought, and the argument from Scripture in favor of the doctrine, instead of being scant, is to us ample and conclusive. The whole Bible breathes the spirit of the doctrine, and the literature of all ages, both prose and poetic, carries its radiance and pours it on

the gloom of stricken hearts, until devout Christian faith wrests comfort from the grave, and sings songs in the night.

But there is another side to this revelation. I have not desired to mar this blessed picture with its weird shadow by any detailed notice.* It is just as true of the wicked as of the righteous, and just as clearly sustained in the human constitution and by the Word of God. Their future state, no less than the righteous, is one of self-consciousness; the difference is in its character and consequences. They shall be endowed with the faculty of recognition, and it is no mercy to them, nor advantage to the righteous, to withhold the warning. And what a vision and what an eternal sting in that world of keen consciousness to look at and recognize the Saviour that was slighted on earth, or to have for a companion, perchance, the very one you have wronged, it may be hopelessly ruined!

What an appeal to the unconverted to correct their relations with God and men here, for there, unchangeably, they shall know as they are known. Then they will never forget why they are what they are, and where they are. God save any reader of these pages such a vision. And now let men heed the warning of that awfulest cry that the broken heart of lost humanity will ever utter: "Hide us from the face," from the sweet, loving, benignant face, "of him," but to the guilty soul fierce and awful in its very beauty and holiness, "and from the wrath of the Lamb."

I must remind you in closing that it won't be long

until the truth will need no demonstration of mine.
We shall know it all and forever.

We are rapidly approaching the mysterious curtain that trembles before us. A day more, in an hour indeed, and some of us may be on the other side of it. Suddenly it may burst upon us like the sunlight when the hand of the tempest has turned aside the black folds of the cloud. Oh, that the thought may now be as sweet to us as a chime from a distant tower. Oh, that Christ now and then may be so much to us that the prospect will comfort and inspire us, and when the hour has come, amid farewells below and the hope of union above, may the victor's shout be ours, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

And then in a moment how blessedly changed the scene! Now the doubt, the struggle, and the parting; and then the clear revelation, the bliss of reunion and recognition—a perfected heaven forever and ever!

"I count the hope no day-dream of the mind,

No vision fair of transitory hue;

The souls of those whom once on earth we knew,

And loved, and walked with in communion kind,

Departed hence, again in heaven to find.

Such hope to nature's sympathies is true;

And such we deem the Holy Word to view

Unfolds; an antidote for grief designed;

One drop from comfort's well.

Nor shall we find more joy for aught in that celestial seat,

Save from God's presence, than again to greet

Each other's spirits, there to dwell combined

In brotherhood of love."

CHAPTER III.

"It cannot be ; each hope, each fear,
That lights the eye or clouds the brow,
Proclaims there is a happier sphere
Than this bleak world that holds us now.
There is a voice which sorrow hears
When heaviest weighs life's galling chain ;
'Tis heaven that whispers, 'Dry your tears,
The pure in heart shall meet again.'"

THAT there are mysteries involved in our future life all who care to think of it well know. But mysteries, what are they but as the earth at twilight, or in the thick dark night, speeding on to the all-revealing brightness of the morning. Mystery is the soil in which revelation has its roots. "Immortality is the mystery of death ; heaven is the mystery of earth." Our embarrassment comes of our being compelled to contemplate these mysteries under the limitations of a finite sphere and with finite endowments. Our best view of the things which are unseen is through a glass darkly. "Now we know in part." But as a polished surface will reflect the light, and throw it beyond itself, so there are great truths which are not only distinctly revealed to our minds, but have become a part of the conscious experience of our souls, which seem to reflect other truths ; and to maintain harmony, and to

preserve relationships which are imperishable, we accept much that comes to us by analogy or reflection. The nature and functions of one truth sometimes provide argument for the support of another. So here.

Sitting in my study a few days ago, with my mind intent upon the subject of these pages, the sound of sweet voices, as from the better world, stole upon my ear. As the delightful cadences fell upon my soul the effect was irresistible. I threw up my window and heard the children of a neighboring school singing "Sweet By-and-by."

"We shall sing, on that beautiful shore,
The melodious song of the blest,
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest."

And I thought, as the sweet melody chimed with my feelings, what a confused medley is much that is woven with the songs of Zion, and much that has been written for the consolation of weary and bruised souls, if there is to be no familiar conscious fellowship between those who have ascended to glory and those who hope to meet them by-and-by. If there be no recognition of friends in heaven, what a waste of thought, of holiest love, and of highest hope there has been in much that has been written. But many of the sweetest hymns of the saints of all ages, and many of the most charming thoughts of the noblest minds are saved from such a reproach by the existence of fixed truths which seem to demand this. Unquestionably there is

great disparity between the heavenly world and this, and between the heavenly character and ours, and yet there are some points of unity, so that we may not simply anticipate, but really experience and enjoy, some of the excellencies that compose the bliss of heaven. The Scriptures abundantly confirm this fact. What the eye cannot see, nor the ear hear, nor even the heart conceive, the spirit is ready to reveal to such as are of like mind. And it is reasonable and scriptural to affirm that these points of unity, these heavenly excellencies which grace has wrought in us, will not be destroyed at death, but, inwoven with the life of the soul, they will survive and be perfected in glory.

We believe in the communion of the saints. It is a truth of the Gospel, and it becomes an experience, an approximation to Christ in the human heart through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and is necessary to all just claim to Christian character. And can it be that what is essential to Christian character here will constitute no element of saintly excellence and enjoyment in heaven? Or can there be joyous, unmarred communion without recognition? Does not that sublime perfection of saintly character which the Word of God reveals as the ultimate achievement of grace demand recognition?

With the thought upon those whom we have laid in the grave, and of that morning of reunion for which we hope, it is asked, "With what body do they come?" and the Apostle answers, as if he had read the revelation in the glory of the third heaven, "It is sown in

corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Cor. 15: 42-44, 53.

And how full is the Apocalypse of rapt words, every one of them reflecting the glory and echoing the music of heaven, and telling of that perfection which awaits the redeemed on high, not simply as separate individuals, but as a great company, a heavenly community. All those things which indicate our limitation and reveal our troubled experience are to be done away, and what grace has given us and made us is not to be left behind, but perfected there. And observe that the delightful thought and sweet spirit of recognition must permeate that whole blessed existence which belongs to the glory that is to be revealed. The moment we abandon it we find confusion, and that perfection involved in the final destiny of man, and of which the Scriptures speak so thrillingly, is sacrificed. It is distinctly stated that we are to have a body, and reasonably so, for a body is essential to our personality. It is to be a spiritual, not a gross material body, the victim of moral taint and physical pain and waste; and yet a body, a perfect spiritual body. Heaven is not the abode of ethereal essences. The great redemption extends its saving ministry not only to the soul, but to the *body* also; Christ came to redeem our

humanity,—the whole man—and nothing will perish but sin, and such elements of our nature as are exclusively adapted to the present constitution. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven ; but a spiritual glorified body can. Jesus did not disrobe himself of the body when He ascended to heaven. Doubtless as it went up it took on more than the superhuman brightness of the transfiguration. The promise is that the redeemed shall possess a body like unto Christ's glorious body. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The late Dr. Adams observes : "It is called a *spiritual* body. Not that it is intangible, impalpable, invisible, as spirit. But so refined is it from all grossness, endowed with such power and life, that no word could so well express its quality as that which God has chosen and employed—a *spiritual* body." And in the endowment of that Christly image there will not be wanting anything that will contribute to its happiness and greatness. The faculties and the functions, the joys and the relationship of that better being, except so far as they have only adaption to this material sphere, will be retained and glorified there. The Apostle says : "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. 15 : 49. And are we not to bear the image of the heavenly, and to have our true humanity glorified and so exalted that we shall not be "composite creatures, half earth and half soul," but wholly of that which will place us beside the infinite God, and in direct rela-

tion to all that constitutes both the character and occupation of heaven? And this heavenly being, is it not our endowment of intelligence, our social capacities, our charm for duty and right, and our unlimited power to serve in them, and to adore and love God the centre of all? But would the saints enjoy any such perfection, did they go about their ministries without any blessed fellowship with or knowledge of one another?

No, since this communion is a source of such pleasure and profit here, one of the sweetest, most comforting charms of our life, and that, too, which constitutes one of the truest and most pleasing revelations of our union with Christ, and of our better being; and since all the intimations of our perfection in glory seem to demand this excellence, we may feel sure that we shall not be robbed of it in that world where the sad breaches between dear friends shall be healed forever. Think of all the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb being strangers! Is that the perfection that awaits the noblest excellencies of our nature, and upon which grace has not only poured her benedictions of light and beauty, but over which she has lifted her bow of promise? The truth will not suffer us to think it. The distinct promises of our Lord relating to the perfected issues of redemption, are that the saints of all ages shall come together in glory, as they never could on earth—in social harmony and joy. And what a meeting that will be!

“ Oh, with what congratulations
Throng thy gates the festive nations !
What the warmth of their embracing !
What the gems thy wall enchasing !
Through that city's streets are wending
Holy throngs, their anthems blending.”

Oh, as our struggling thought tries to catch some glimpses of that paradise which sin has never cursed, that the wayward and hopeless might struggle to touch the hem of His garment, without whom heaven is a delusion, and that we who have confessed Him might honor Him with a love more worthy of Him, and that would indicate a longing desire in us to sit with Him and the ransomed by and by at the festival of His final triumph ! The travellers that now tread the paths that lead to the city of God are few and scattered ; but a great throng, we read, an innumerable company, will at last come to swell the fellowship of the skies. I am sure we are only competent to contemplate such a theme as this when we have a good hope through grace, that we shall be of the number by and by.

But into that perfection of which I have spoken enters the *faculty and grace of love*. We know how much it is in the moral and religious nature here, how much in the character and purpose of God. There can be no noble attainment on earth, no perfection in heaven, without it. Love communicated and moved by grace is the fulfilling of the law. Love is the test of Christian discipleship. Love is the assurance of Christian faith and hope. Love is the chief and imperishable grace. Love is the sub-

limest reach of rational existence. "God is love." And this love that was heard in the cries, and that mingled with the blood of a Saviour's cross, predominates over all other love in the child of grace, and gives to fellowship on earth a benediction that at once implants the desire for and confirms the belief of its existence in heaven.

Christians are to love one another as such, and this love finds expression in, and is magnified by, acquaintance and fellowship here, and if we are not perfect in it, often faulty and cold, is it not the evidence that we are going on unto perfection, and can that be perfection in heaven from which it is excluded?

No; that love which, irrespective of all minor differences, binds all Christian hearts together, and leads them to seek, and causes them to be happiest and holiest in personal fellowship, is to carry over, and in purer motive, in a warmer intensity, and a holy purpose it will find its perfection there.

Then, indeed, it will be love without any touch of dissimulation, that perfect love which casteth out fear and every other evil. And then, not less because it is lavished upon the saints, and those we loved below, but more than ever it will go out supreme to God and the Lamb. If human nature loved what it should, and as it should, it would have in it the element of a perfectly happy society. And just this is to be the heavenly condition. Love, pure, unsullied, and unselfish love is to prevail, and in this do we have the ideal of the perfection of mankind. Bernard, in his

Progress of Doctrine, says: "The inherent vice of human society lies in the depravity of human nature. If that were healed and transmuted into universal righteousness and love, the internal happiness and perfection would be secured. And they are to be secured in that city where the people shall be all righteous, and where love shall never fail. To the formation of those habits of mind the teaching of God is now visibly directed, and men are trained on the grounds and motives of the Gospel to love one another. Love is ever represented as the end of the commandment, the highest attainment of man, the completion of his education by God. And no wonder it is so represented, since the present prepares the future, and that future is to be a state of society—'a city which is compact together.' " Farther on, in speaking of the heavenly community, he observes: "Its fabric and scenery are described in symbolic language, glowing with all precious and glorious things; nor do we desire an interpreter who will tell us what the symbols severally represent in the future details of the glorified society. . . . I only dwell upon the fact that it is *a city*, which stands before us as the final home of mankind. If we think only of our individual portion we miss the completeness of Scripture in its provisions for the completeness of man. If individual blessedness were the highest thought of humanity, it might have been sufficient to have restored the lost garden of Eden, and to have left the inhabitants of the new earth to dwell safely in its wilderness and sleep in its woods. . . .

Not so does the revelation of God inform the expectations of those who receive it. Other systems evade the demands of the highest tendencies of man; this provides that they shall be realized. It decrees not only the individual happiness but the corporate perfection of man, and closes the book of its prophecy by assuring the children of the living God that He hath prepared for them a city." Then heaven is to be a community, a society of souls, kindred and knit together by a love and in a ministry that will challenge in them a perfection that is spotless.

But whilst the conditions of our Christian faith impel us here to love all, and especially those of the household of faith, it only becomes real, and responsive, and blessed to those who are known to us. The present constitution limits our acquaintance here, but in the perfect state that limitation will not exist, unless recognition be a myth, and then how can perfect love have its sway, for how can we love, consciously love, those we do not know? And how can the heavenly state be a society, and how can there be that perfection of love and service for which we are taught to hope, without that mutual recognition so clearly implied in these conditions? It seems plain enough that not only will the faculty of love prevail in heaven, but that perfection of it so clearly implied in mutual fellowship will be manifest, and we shall not wander lonely and aimless in glory, but in company with the saints, and we shall enjoy that conscious blessed fellowship of which we have here the dim foretaste.

“Would He,” I have read it in a volume translated from the German, “whose name is Love, who binds magnetically together distant worlds and stars, and who has bestowed affection as the sweetest of His gifts on all sentient beings under the sun; would He have ordained it so, that the better life beyond the grave should commence with the annihilation of that true love which is the universal law of creation? No, no; faithful souls, in time and in eternity, commune lovingly with each other, and join hands above the grave.” We still belong to our loved ones in heaven, and they belong to us, and when the portal parts to our advancing step we shall not know them less, nor love them less, now that we have come into the full blaze of revelation. Oh, methinks, there must be a mutual greeting of love when saints who have been long parted meet in heaven. Yes,—

“They sin who tell us love can die;
With life all other passions fly—
All others are but vanity.

* * * *

Earthly, those passions of the earth,
They perish where they have their birth,
But love is indestructible.
Its holy flame forever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth;
Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times oppressed,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest.
It soweth here in toil and care,
But the harvest-time of love is there.”

Mother, as the twilight closes about you, or the autumn leaves cover the grave in which lie your hopes, or as some new grief wrings your heart, you often look away toward the bright stars, as if to catch some glimpse of those who have gone and left you alone, and whom you loved here and regret you did not love more; and you wonder whether you shall meet, and know, and love them in heaven. It is the longing of the dutiful child as she remembers, or stands at the green mound under which her mother sleeps. It is the holy tie which binds the lonely loving heart of many a bereft husband or wife. Yes, a great multitude breathe it toward heaven in their holiest thoughts and deepest sighs.

And does not the comforting Gospel allow me to tell you that if your loved ones have been gathered to the Lord, and that if you love Him before all, and your own the more because of it, that you shall be gathered to them? How could we think of the saints in light, rid of all the ills of life, without such loving fellowship? We do not part on earth only to part the more when we have come to the crown and palm. No, it is at least one strain in the anthem the blessed Gospel has woven for us, that when the Master calls for us, we shall go:

“Where the bond is never severed,
Partings, claspings, sobs, and moans,
Midnight waking, twilight weeping,
Heavy noontide, all are done.

Where the child has found its mother,
Where the mother finds her child ;
Where dear families are gathered,
That were scattered on the wild.

* * * *

Where we find the joy of loving
As we never loved before,
Loving on unchilled, unhindered,
Loving once, and never more !”

But there are other facts involved in our future destiny that demand recognition. That consummation so thrilling and delightful to the righteous is to be heralded by the *resurrection*.

The doctrine is not without mystery, but in nature and in His Word God has been abundant in such revelation as should expel our doubts and challenge our faith. It is God who is to raise the dead, and hence with us it is not to be thought a thing incredible. And notice, it is to be a resurrection, not a creation. “Thy brother shall rise again,” is the sweet message which our Lord speaks at every broken hearthstone, and to those sorrowing ones whose conversation is in heaven.

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” That one for whom we weep and of whom we speak in the sanctity of the home circle, my brother, my sister, my parents, my angel wife or devoted husband, my dear child, my loved companion, shall rise, the same

conscious personality from whom I have been parted so long, nor shall we be strangers in that marvellous transfiguration. The conscious knowing power that loved me and spoke to me here, shall love and know me there. The face may have been marred here with many a sorrow, furrowed with many a care, quite shrivelled by the scorching of disease or the wasting of age, but I will not know it less when, like the fresh flower that blooms with the morning, I see it in the glory-flush of the resurrection.

“Tho’ then thy cheek with deathless bloom be sheen,
And rays of splendor wreath thy sunlike brow,
That change I deem shall sever not between
Thee and thy former self; nor disallow
That love’s tried eyes discern thee through the screen
Of glory then, as of corruption now.”

If we might adopt the suggestion of analogy, what a tendency to reunion there is in nature. Here we have the constant miracle. And I think, as I gaze upon this wonder, that what God has united in the rational creature, and made to distinguish him here, He will reunite above. In God’s creation there is a division and a union of things as in the family; they adhere, and when separated find each other again. It is a fundamental principle in creation, and the preventive of confusion. Light blends with light. The water rises to the sky, the gift of ocean, lake, and river, but it descends again in rain and dew, so finding its original source,

And if such a law reigns on earth, why not in the higher realm?

A German writer speaking of this principle of affinity says: "Can we suppose that it rules less in the world of the higher spirits, where that which in lifeless things is but a vague impulse is raised and ennobled into a conscious sentiment? In that world where dwells God, the source of all love, where his laws and his works are but the results of love? It is true that the form in which the beloved being became dear to me on earth rests in the grave. But in reality it was not this perishable form that I loved, but the imperishable spirit; and the veil which surrounded the lovely soul was only dear to me because of its connection with the angel spirit whom it concealed. The veil has fallen, but the angel lives." And, now, shall there be union, and will I meet and recognize the one whose outer form, in which I knew him, is changed? I still recognize the plant after it has taken on the coronation of bloom. And, now, concerning the spirits of our loved ones let the Holy Ghost speak: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 1 Thess. 4:14. "Then shall I know, even as I also am known." Yes, departed loved ones, our names, it may be, written on the same page of the book of life, united here in Christian communion, we shall not be divided in heaven. You have laid by the dusty armor, and entered upon the rest of triumph; it is not for us to summon you back, but to go to you by the same way

of a Saviour's love and agony ; that is the order of the reunion, and may God help us to render ourselves worthy of such a delightful event in the perfection of our immortality.

And the blessed thought is constantly going forward to full and final realization. Tired pilgrims are hastening to rest, and long-parted ones, laying their crowns at the feet of Him whose love has wrought it all, are being united in a fellowship never to be broken. As the poet beautifully sings :

“Thus heaven is gathering one by one, in its capacious breast,
All that is pure and permanent, and beautiful and blest ;
The family is scattered yet, though of one home and heart,
Part militant in earthly gloom, in heavenly glory part ;
But who can tell the rapture when the circle is complete,
And all the children, scattered now, before the Father meet ?
One fold—one Shepherd—one employ—one universal home !”

Recognition also seems necessary to the *retention and growth of knowledge*.

In the present sphere, growth in grace is growth in knowledge. It is the development of the spiritual faculties, and in this the acquisition of spiritual intelligence and experience, and the farther we advance here in spiritual progress the better we apprehend one another. But in God's arrangement, if we were lone strangers, if it were not for our community of spiritual interest and our Christian fellowship, this growth would be very seriously interfered with, for our graces must exercise themselves in duties and relationships that imply and demand acquaintance.

And if we are ignorant of one another in heaven, then how much, and what precious knowledge gained here, must be lost. But it seems that we shall know vastly more in the better world, and that growth in knowledge is one of the sublime occupations of that blissful abode. "For we know (now) in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . . For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13:9, 10, 12.

The contrast with respect to knowledge, between the present and the future, is plainly drawn in this Scripture.

Here there is limitation, there infinitude. Of nothing, I am sure, can we be more painfully conscious here than our limitation in spiritual knowledge. And this is explained in the fact that this knowledge comes not in any abundance of revelation we have, for we certainly have much (but of what avail to the multitude?), but it comes of the growth of the soul in the spirit and truth of the revelation we have. It is the pure in heart who see God, and are able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Sir Isaac Newton knew more when on his knees he adored the God of the universe than when he swept over the heavens with his mighty intellect. Paul knew more when he exclaimed, "I know whom I have believed;" or, "Oh! the depth

of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" than when he confounded the Grecians at Athens. And this character of knowledge is to characterize and employ us in the better world. There will be nothing in that pure and holy life to keep us at disadvantage in acquiring truth, nothing to repel its light as it pours its flood upon us. Then there will be a relish for knowledge, against which our fallen nature often makes protest, and nothing will satisfy it there but infinite holiness. Here we reach after it, but with a short arm; but there we shall touch its very centre and feel every throb of its living heart. The mind will be untrammelled, and how vast and majestic will be the sweep of its power. Mysteries that now baffle and bewilder us will then dissolve before us as does the simple page to the cultured intellect. The word ignorance will never be heard in heaven. The little child the angels one day bore away from your home, and that has now ceased to wonder at sight of its beaming face imaged in the glassy sea, how you might well now sit at its feet and learn heavenly knowledge. It knows as it was known. The process of intellectual recovery which Jesus began in His redemptive ministry here shall be perfected there, "where the last film of darkness shall be removed, the last veil of ignorance withdrawn, and the ransomed mind shall see 'face to face' in the immediate and intuitive perception of un-mixed and unclouded truth."

Bereaved one, as you have thought of your dead until your eyes swam in tears, and your sensitive memory

disclosed its sacred record until you almost felt your loved one sitting beside you, you have doubtless wondered what is his image, and what is he doing in the blessed land whither he has gone? You knew him here, for he was yours, inwoven with your life, so that nothing human can fill his place; but shall I know him there? is the query that often haunts you. Is it not seen that that is a spiritual realm, and that those who happily have already entered upon it are spiritual beings, and that not a little knowledge, but vast knowledge, is characteristic of that world? And, now, is it not enough? shall not the spiritual apprehend the spiritual, and shall not the saints know one another in heaven? If not, how shall they unravel the sublime mysteries of God, the great deep of His grace, and the wealth of His glory? Will there be growth in all holy knowledge, and no recognition of the saints in light? no blessed conscious fellowship among those whom God has redeemed and brought to the mansions prepared to spend an eternity?

The thought would turn heaven into a place of selfish seclusion, and quench one of the brightest beams in the sun of its happiness. No—

“If saints each mutual joy feel here below,
When they each other’s heavenly foretastes know,—
What joys transport them at each other’s sight,
When they shall meet in the empyrean height!
Friends e’en in heaven one happiness would miss,
Should they not know each other when in bliss.”

Finally, the intelligent and comprehensive study of *God's providence demands recognition*. Heaven is a place and a condition of wonderful and fruitful activity. There is no rest by reason of any infirmity in the saints, nor any evil in that which occupies them. They rest from all that pains and wearies in this life; but in the enjoyment and prosecution of all that is beautiful and good, "they rest not day and night." Rev. 4: 8. There is a perfection of life and strength that finds its element and satisfaction in ceaseless ministry, and in the unravelling of those exhaustless revelations of which God and His wonderful purpose respecting man are the subjects. "They serve Him day and night." Rev. 7: 15.

The heavenly existence, then, is not a state of dreamy torpor and inaction, but one of ceaseless and delightful enjoyment. "The soul and its glorified aspirations will be like the sun, coming forth from his chamber, and rejoicing like a strong man to run his race; ever climbing the firmament, yet never reaching the meridian; coming nearer the excellent glory, and yet still speaking of it as light inaccessible." It must be so if we are to know as we are known. It is very delightful to contemplate heaven as the Rest of the saints; "where the clarion of battle is hushed, every storm-cloud past, every weary night-watch at an end, the spirit cradled in perfect peace, the Sabbath of eternity!" But the most thrilling and pleasing thought is that blessed ministry, that endless march into the infinite depths, that loving struggle to comprehend God and his ways;

and so the glorified soul will go on in a progress the thought of which now bewilders us.

In that progress will be the investigation of God's providence, with which, not only as individuals, but as households, as churches and communities, we have been so intimately and sometimes so tenderly identified. To our half-blind vision what a great deep is God's providence!

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

And sympathizing with our embarrassment, He tells us we shall know hereafter. We shall know as we are known. Not a day passes but something in the great sweep of God's ordering startles us, and sometimes seems to dash our best hopes to the dust, and we look about in the dark all bewildered until the voice of Christian faith whispers to us: "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Ps. 97:2. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8:28. And whilst this gives composure to the perplexed soul, it does not solve the mystery. That revelation belongs to the future. Providence makes no mistakes; it is the issue of infinite perfection, and not until we partake of that perfection shall we be able fully to comprehend it. Here, in the sphere of providence we think and speak as children; we know in part, but when that which is in part is taken away, and the perfect has come, we shall

no longer have to do with the dim twilight, but with the now unendurable flash of celestial knowledge.

What were mysteries here will have become the easy attainments of knowledge there. There we will find the perfection of present mysteries in a revelation, which will be read by our celestial capacities, in what we are, in our surroundings, and especially in the radiant face of Him at whose feet we cast our crowns. There our endless queries will all be answered; and we will see as never before how God was, and is, and must be in all the movements of the universe—all in all. But who supposes that such revelation will be experienced without mutual communication. The providence that brought a flood of light to my home, or that swept it with a wave of black crest, and gave us a memory that can never be recalled without the responsive tear, we shall gather to talk about it, and to apprehend the way of God more perfectly in it. The mother, the husband, the wife, the child will hasten in mutual love and fellowship to disclose the wonders, the sublime issues of an afflictive dispensation, which they failed to comprehend here, and which in its benedictions now quite surprises them more than the mystery did on earth. Ah, yes, sorrowing one, not alone like some recluse, but along with those whose hearts were riven when your own was struck, and whose tears fell at the same sad shrine, you shall discover why the child was taken, why the strong arm on which you leaned was broken, why the delicate and timid were left and the buoyant and vigorous taken, why the

angel of the house departed one sad night, and you and your motherless children were left to weep over the ashes on your hearthstone. It will all come to light, and as others than yourself were identified with the appointment and purpose of the providence, they must be associated in its disclosures and final end. I do not think we will speak about and search into God's dealings with us as families, as members of the same household of faith, and as sinners saved by the same redemption, and all the while be ignorant of one another.

No: in the joy of recognition, the blessedness of a fellowship that itself will promote the delightful revelation, we will not only mutually contemplate the providences that involve our homes, but we will recount the way of grace in which God has led us; we will trace the divine purpose and progress in all the history of the Church, marking her conflict and trial here and her triumph there. Oh, what a revelation of the manifold wisdom of God awaits us, and how the glory of it will be enhanced by our mutual research and enjoyment! In view of these gracious anticipations, I wonder not that one like Paul, whose faith grappled with such vigor with the unseen, must exclaim, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18. Bereaved one, if the angels have dropped this beatitude on the grave that has inclosed your earthly hopes, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," then look away from the sorrow

and mystery of the dispensation to the revelation in heaven ; think less of the parting and more of the meeting, less of the loss and more of the gain ; you are to meet by and by, and then, what a welcome ! and what promotion and glory, as with untrammelled wing your united souls hasten to study the ways of God, and you rise higher, and find love to be the continual impulse in all the divine plan, and behold such results as you dreamed not of, and what sentiments of praise will rush to your lip ! Then God will be vindicated, and with a wonder that no achievement of creation, no result of grace on earth ever awakened, you will be led to exclaim in the grateful rapture of your soul : “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

From these several truths, then, and others which might be adduced, it seems evident that we shall recognize our friends in heaven. That, which grace has made so blessed here, that, through which the presence and beauty of Jesus have been made more real and delightful, that, in which, both in joy and sorrow, heaven has so often been imaged, will not be lost or diminished, but perfected in glory ; and there, in a sense higher and more heavenly than ever experienced here, we shall behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren that agree to dwell together in unity.

Oh, it is a beam of light, a whisper from the home of many mansions, a hope lighted by and to be realized where the walls are jasper and the streets are gold,

that I would not destroy, as, like an angel from heaven, it brings its consolation to bereft homes and hearts. Only see to it that the life does not mock the hope, and let us not fail to exalt and honor it by heeding the lessons it brings.

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” 2 Peter 3 : 14.

CHAPTER IV.

“Is friendship, then, unfit for heaven? Would love—
That holy impulse which in Jesus dwelt, and streamed
From Him into the souls of those who touched
His loving heart—would it pollute the place?
If that which buds in grace is not to bloom
In bliss, and thou canst prove it so, say on!”

WHEN the spies returned from the land of promise they brought with them a luscious cluster of grapes, taken in the Valley of Eshcol, as an evidence of the fruitfulness and fertility of that goodly land, concerning which they said: “Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.” In this chapter I propose to go into the “goodly land” of this pleasing subject, and, in the opinions of others, bring back such ripe and fragrant clusters as I may find. It quite relieves my fear of presumption in attempting to write upon this theme, that so many of the wise and good have spoken upon it with such assurance of conviction, and with such inspiration of hope. Are not these views of the great and good rich grape-clusters burdened with the fragrance of the heavenly Canaan? And if God will help me to entwine these living vines about any stricken lonely heart, or to hang these ripe clusters on the walls of any desolate home, so that hope will drop her anchor on the bright side of the portal that quivers

between the heavenly world and ours, and thus stimulate a better heart and a stronger faith, the ministry rendered, I am sure, will not be without a benediction.

It is not without significance that when the specific aim has not been to establish the doctrine of recognition, the wisest and best of men have often made such deliverances as most clearly announce the glad hope for the coming realization of which so many look. Who, I may ask, that has any right to think and talk of heaven, who that has any holy longing toward its revelation and glory, has not at some time spoken of that thrilling welcome and unmarred fellowship which await those whose names are written on high? In the field we glean there is not a stray bunch here and there; but beautiful clusters lie everywhere, until the graves and memory of thousands are fragrant with their sweetness. And these utterances are the language of hope and love; and how quick are these, when they are nourished at the fountain of the Gospel, to apprehend and interpret truth. The dew finds its way up to the sun without any knowledge of the laws of motion, or of the mysteries of light, and so, often, where there has been no learning, but little knowledge of objective theology, love has seen the bright edges of this truth, and has sometimes uttered itself as if taught of God.

The mountains, the seas, the stars, the flowers, manifest themselves to those who love them. So does God. The pure in heart see Him. And the opinions of others on this doctrine are entitled to great weight, because their language is the language of love,—love that has

been kindled at the cross of Christ,—and such love is one of God's elect interpreters.

How sublime is the thought that it is not a perverse judgment, not a selfish controversial spirit, not an arrogant exclusiveness that clings to and contends for this truth, but it is the highest type of the heart's love, that scatters the cloud that has settled upon the life, and chases away the weird loneliness of the bereft home, and discovers to the soul the light and beauty of that fellowship which is never more to be interrupted.

And this is in harmony with those beautiful thoughts which now endear the memory of the dead to us and ennoble the character of the living.

Nor let it be supposed that the doctrine of recognition is a modern invention. It was a struggling hope in the heart of the heathen. Cicero said: "I desire not only to meet those whom I myself knew, but those also of whom I have read or heard, or regarding whom I myself have written. O illustrious day, when I shall go hence to that divine council and assembly of souls, when I shall escape from this crowd and rabble; for I shall go not only to those illustrious men of whom I have before spoken, but also to my Cato, than whom one more excellent or illustrious in goodness was never born. He himself consoled me, judging that our distance and parting would not long continue." Socrates in addressing the tribunal before which he stood said: "Will it not be unspeakably blessed when, escaped from those who call themselves

judges, to appear before those who truly deserve the name, and to associate with all who have maintained the cause of truth and righteousness?" What marvellous flashes of light from the benighted mind of the heathen are these; how like the sweet notes of a bird in the dark wilderness; how like the mellow radiance of a star that glows amid the rifts of the black cloud, they appear to us.

But it remained for Christianity to give stability to this fond hope, and a better intelligence to the utterances of the heart concerning it. Ever since the angels sang in the skies of Bethlehem; ever since the mind and heart of humanity has been lifted to that world whence Jesus ascended; ever since the lamp of resurrection and immortality has been swung by a pierced hand at the dying bed and over the graves of believers, the human heart has been fostering this hope, and voicing it out in words that sound like chimes from the towers of the celestial city.

When a great calamity had fallen upon the community, Cyprian said to the people to whom he ministered: "We ought not to mourn for those who, by the summons of the Lord, are delivered from the world, since we know they are not lost, but sent before us,—that they have only taken their leave of us in order to precede us. We may long for them as we do for those who are on a distant voyage, but not lament them. Why do we not ourselves wish to depart out of this world, or why do we mourn our departed ones as lost? Why do we not hasten to see our country, to

greet our parents? There await us a vast multitude of dear ones—fathers, mothers, children—who are already secure of their own salvation, and anxious only for ours. What a mutual joy to them and us when we shall come into their presence and embrace!”

There is something in the doctrine of recognition to give sanctity and permanence to the home, and to invest its duties with the highest dignity and excellence.

Without it the home could not be the symbol of heaven, and much that has been written by its ash-strewn hearthstone would be without meaning. For example, these and kindred lines :

“Over the river they beckon to me,
 Loved ones who’ve crossed to the further side,
 The gleam of their snowy robes I see,
 But their voices are lost in the dashing tide.
 There’s one with ringlets of sunny gold,
 And eyes the reflection of heaven’s own blue,
 He crossed in the twilight gray and cold,
 And the pale mist hid him from mortal view ;
 We saw not the angels who met him there,
 The gates of the city we could not see,
 Over the river, over the river,
 My brother stands waiting to welcome me.

* * * * *

“Over the river the boatman pale
 Carried another, the household pet,
 Her brown curls waved in the gentle gale,
 Darling Minnie ! I see her yet.

She crossed on her bosom her dimpled hands,
And fearlessly entered the phantom bark,
We felt it glide from the silver sands,
And all our sunshine grew strangely dark ;
We know she is safe on the further side,
Where all the ransomed and angels be ;
Over the river, the mystic river,
My childhood's idol is waiting for me."

Certainly we can, and we do put a higher and nobler estimate upon our children and friends here when we are permitted to indulge the hope that we shall meet and know them in heaven.

Said Richard Baxter : " I must confess, as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them as such ; but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them forever ; and I take comfort in those of them who are dead or absent as believing I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a love which shall then be perfected."

Allusion has been made to the social aspect of heaven and to the perpetuation of our human friendships, both of which are not only implied in but sustained by this doctrine. On this point the distinguished Archbishop Whately says : " I am convinced

that the extension and perfection of friendship will constitute a great part of the future happiness of the blessed. . . . Many a one selects when he is reading history—a truly pious Christian, most especially, in sacred history—some one or two favorite characters, with whom he feels that a personal acquaintance would have been peculiarly delightful to him. Why should not such a desire be realized in a future state? A wish to see and personally know, for example, the Apostle Paul, or John, is the most likely to arise in the noblest and purest mind. I should be very sorry to think such a wish absurd and presumptuous, or unlikely ever to be gratified. The highest enjoyment, doubtless, to the blessed will be the personal knowledge of their great and beloved Master; yet I cannot but think that some part of their happiness will consist in an intimate knowledge of the greatest of his followers also, and of those of them in particular whose peculiar qualities are to each the most attractive.

“In this world, again, our friendships are limited, not only to those who live in the same age and country, but to a small portion even of them—to a small portion even of those who are not unknown to us, and whom we know to be estimable and amiable, and who, we feel, might have been among our dearest friends. Our command of time and leisure to cultivate friendships imposes a limit to their extent,—they are bounded rather by the occupation of our thoughts than of our affections,—and the removal of such impediments in a

better world seems to me a most desirable and a most probable change.

“I see no reason, again, why those who have been dearest friends on earth, should not, when admitted to that happy state, continue to be so, with full knowledge and recollection of their former friendship.”

In this same line of thought the eminent Dr. Dwight, whose whole temper of mind and habit forbid anything like the visionary, merely sentimental, or speculative, says, in speaking of the redeemed in heaven, “They are brethren to each other. In this character they will behold each other as made of one blood, and as sprung from the same loins ; as redeemed from sin and misery by the death of the Son of God ; as renewed by the same spirit of truth ; as fellow-members of the same church ; as fellow-travellers in the same journey towards heaven ; as ruined by the same apostasy, recovered by the same mercy, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance. How many bonds of endearment and union are here presented to our view ! how intimate are these relations ! how important in their nature ! what sources of attachment, what indissoluble ligaments do they form for the heart ! what intense endearment must they awaken ! what delightful offices of love must they inspire !

“Heaven is the world of friendship, of friendship unmingled, ardent, and entire. The disinterested love of the Gospel dwells here in every bosom. Selfishness, since the ejection of the fallen angels from these delightful regions, has been here unknown and unheard

of, except in the melancholy tidings, which have reached the happy inhabitants, of its deplorable effects upon our apostate world. Here every individual, in the strictest sense, fulfils the second great command of the moral law, and literally loves his neighbor as himself. No private, separate interest is even proposed.

“At the same time this friendship will endure forever. No degeneracy will awaken alarm and distrust, no alienation chill the heart, no treachery pierce the soul with anguish; no parent will mourn over an apostate child, and no child over a profligate parent. No brothers or sisters will be wrung with agony by the defection and corruption of those who, inexpressibly endeared to them in this world by the tender ties of nature and the superior attachments of the Gospel, have here walked with them side by side in the path of life, and have at length become their happy companions in the world of glory. Husbands and wives, also here mutually and singularly beloved, will there be united, not indeed in their former earthly relation, but in a friendship far more delightful, and, wafted onward by the stream of ages, without a sigh, without a fear, will become, in each other’s eyes, more and more excellent, amiable, and endeared forever. That the redeemed who have been known to each other in the present world will be mutually known in heaven I have shown in a former discourse. That this knowledge will prove the means of mutual happiness cannot be doubted.”

Nor was it mere sentiment with these men; their

testimony is rooted in something more reliable than mere feeling. It was not when they had returned from some new-made grave they spoke thus, as if the light of heaven was upon them. They looked through the clear glass of the Word of God, and then gave the world the interpretation of their vision.

Dr. Knapp, Professor of Theology in the University of Halle, observes: "According to the representations contained in the Holy Scriptures, the saints will dwell together in the future world, and form, as it were, a kingdom or state of God. They will there partake of a common felicity. Their enjoyment will doubtless be very much heightened by friendship and by their confiding intercourse with each other. . . . That we shall recognize our former friends, shall be again associated with them, was uniformly believed by all antiquity. This idea was admitted as altogether rational, and as a consoling thought, by the most distinguished ancient philosophers. Even reason regards this as in a high degree probable; but to one who believes the Holy Scriptures it cannot be a matter of doubt and conjecture."

Says the eloquent Melville: "It is yet but a little while, and we shall be delivered from the burden and the conflict, and, with all those who have preceded us in the righteous struggle, enjoy the deep raptures of a Mediator's presence. Then, reunited to the friends with whom we took sweet counsel upon earth, we shall recount our toil only to heighten our ecstasy, and call

to mind the tug and the din of war, only that, with a more bounding throb and a richer song, we may feel and celebrate the wonders of redemption."

Such is the frank opinion of a few of the most eminent scholars and divines the modern Church has produced. To them it seemed, as it has and now seems to not a few, that a denial of this doctrine is a violation of the noblest elements of our nature, and that to disbelieve it is to deny the truth, and embarrass well-established views of God's purposes concerning our future.

Along with many others these noble witnesses have long since entered upon the realization of this hope. Who doubts, who desires to doubt, that they now, with the many to whom they ministered on earth, know and enjoy that blissful fellowship concerning which they bore such beautiful testimony when upon the earth? And this testimony was not a dream, not a mere sentiment, not a gush of the heart when it wept over some withered treasure, but it was the calm judgment of matured minds, of men mighty in the Scriptures and high up in those revelations which God is pleased to make to those who live long in communion with Him; and we accept these witnesses with confidence. Could they swing back the pearly gates and speak to us from amid the "excellent glory," I do not believe they would have occasion to deny a line they have written on recognition, but we must be gladly content with the earthly testimony :

“For none return from those quiet shores,
Who cross with the boatman cold and pale;
We hear the dip of the golden oars,
And catch a gleam of the snowy sail;
And, lo! they have passed from our yearning heart,
They cross the stream and are gone for aye,
We may not sunder the veil apart
That hides from our vision the gates of day,
We only know that their barks no more
May sail with us o’er life’s stormy sea;
Yet somewhere I know on the unseen shore,
They watch, and beckon, and wait for me.”

And this grand truth, like a sweet symphony that lingers in the air, is caught up and heralded on, until all the years are made resonant with its music, and so we have the testimony of the living as well as of the dead.

How fragrant with Christian grace and hope are these words of Rev. J. C. Ryle, a man who, in the Christian earnestness of his pen and the influence of his piety, touches two hemispheres. In a little leaflet redolent with the consolation of the Gospel, he says: “There is something to my mind unspeakably glorious in this prospect; few things so strike me in looking forward to the good things yet to come. Heaven will be no strange place to us when we get there. We shall not be oppressed by the cold, shy, chilly feeling that we know nothing of our companions. We shall feel at home. We shall see all of whom we have read in Scripture, and know them all, and mark the peculiar graces of each one. . . . If it is pleasant to know

one or two saints and meet them occasionally now, what will it be to know them all and to dwell with them forever?

“There is something unspeakably comforting, moreover, as well as glorious in this prospect. It lights up the valley of the shadow of death. It strips the sick-bed and the grave of half their terrors. Our beloved friends who have fallen asleep in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. The children of the same God and partakers of the same grace can never be separated very long. They are sure to come together again when this world has passed away. Our pleasant communion with our kind Christian friends is only broken off for a small moment, and is soon to be eternally resumed. . . . Blessed and happy indeed will that meeting be! better a thousand times than the parting! We parted in sorrow, we shall meet in joy; we parted in stormy weather, and we shall meet in a calm harbor; we parted amidst pains, and aches, and groans, and infirmities, we shall meet with glorious bodies, able to serve our Lord forever without distraction. And, best of all, we shall meet never to be parted, never to shed one more tear, never to put on mourning, never to say good-by and farewell again. Oh! it is a blessed thought that saints will know one another in heaven!”

And this, my brethren, is the joyous witness of a man who is distinguished for loyalty to the truth and love to Christ; one who drinks often and deeply at the crystal fountain of the Gospel. But we are compassed

about with a great cloud of witnesses, and we hasten on. In an address made by Bishop Foster, of the M. E. Church, at Chautauqua Lake, a few years ago, I find these words: "To my own faith it is unfalteringly certain that death will bring me to those I loved and bring them to me, as it is that it will bring me to immortality. If the one is true the other must be. I must cease to be a man and be clothed with some other order of life before I could even consent to enter a heaven which is barren of the spirits who have been so dear to me on earth. Ruth's devotion demanded a home and a grave with her whom she loved; but no less did she demand a heaven with her. 'Thy God shall be my God' carries in it the avowal of a hope of eternal union. It is safe to say that no hope is so universal, so inextinguishable, so confident. Its disappointment would shroud eternity with darkness and cover its ages with woe. There is no fact in human experience, no attribute of human nature, no quality of Godhead, no circumstance in the divine administration, which warrants doubt. Every principle must be revolutionized, the future must be a total contradiction of the past, old precedents and analogies must all fail, all things must radically change, death must obliterate all memories, and affections, and ideas, and laws, or the awakening in the next world will be amid the welcomes, and loves, and raptures of those who left us with tearful farewells and with dying promises that they would wait to welcome us when they should arrive. And so they do.

Not so sorrowfully, not anxiously but lovingly, they wait to bid us welcome.

“Not as strangers approaching some lonely shore should we depart, but as loved and longed-for pilgrims, who return to open arms and welcoming hearts. I long to see Jesus, and angels who have watched over me and befriended me, and all of the great and good whose virtues have enriched the ages. I know I shall hasten rapturously to worship my Lord; may-be He will take me in His arms to bear me over the river, and so to Him I shall pour out my great and reverent love; but I am certain I shall see, crowding down nearest the shore, some forms that will give me their first caresses; forms that will be more to me than all the jewelled host that circle the eternal throne. The etiquette of heaven will recognize their right. Nor will it be for a day.”

What a cluster is not this? It smells of the beautiful land that bounds the other side of our life-sea. There is a real vigor in it; and as I have written it for others it has brought me comfort, for I could not but see in it the picture of a loved one, dressed in the white robe of the saints, whom I met but a few weeks ago at the shrine of devotion, at the social board, with whom I walked to the house of God, and with whom I talked of the days gone by; but we parted, little thinking that it was never to meet again on earth. Dear soul, how radiant and how beautiful in glory! And now, methinks, it is with an angel's grace she beckons us onward, and with an angel's smile, I am sure, she will

one day bid parents, husband and children, brothers and sisters welcome at the beautiful gate. Oh! how these noble testimonies should come to every stricken but believing heart, as the ring of "Gospel bells," or as the rolling, transporting echoes of the choir that chants before the throne.

A few days ago the Rev. Dr. Richard L. Storrs, of Brooklyn, with his thoughts on heaven and his eye resting on the lifeless form of his venerable friend, Rev. Dr. S. H. Cox, said :

"He is with those whom he loved and honored, in his own communion and in others, who passed from earth before him, with whom he had walked here in intimate fellowship, with whom he walks henceforth in the blessed and holy companionship of the skies. . . . He is with the many of his congregation whom he had instructed, quickened, and led toward heaven, and with whom he had gone, as they passed from earth, up almost to the celestial portal !

"How tender and joyous must be their mighty welcome of him ! . . . May we not conceive the companies of those on high who knew him here thronging around him to welcome him with special fondness to that immense praising assembly, from which they who have once entered go no more out ! You, of this church, welcome this lifeless body as it pauses for an hour on its solemn way to the place of graves. But they, more numerous, who have gone up from hence greet with acclaim of gladdest triumph the living spirit, crowned with fresh power and ethereal beauty, as it enters the

spheres of life eternal! The heavens seem to open above us, and I can offer no other prayer, no better wish for you who will follow these dear remains to yonder resting-place than that over all noises of the city streets, and through all silences of the city of the dead, your listening souls may catch from afar the echoes of that celestial welcome!" It is a beautiful tribute, but not more beautiful as a tribute to a departed friend than it is a noble and eloquent testimony to the truthfulness of the doctrine of heavenly recognition.

Are all these voices that come up out of the deep of the human soul, when its love is purest and its faith is strongest, nothing but empty sound?

Have these holy longings, these reaches heavenward, no root in God, in Christ, and in the everlasting truth? Doubtless much we have said and believed to be true will be stricken out when the day of a higher and better revelation shall dawn; but we believe these sublime testimonies, so fully in harmony with all that is noblest in human nature and with everything that is beautiful and celestial in the divine plan, will stand, and one of the grandest hopes and greatest sources of heavenly enjoyment will continue imbedded as a blessed conviction in the moral constitution of man, and drop its fadeless light on the weary heart and rugged pathway of the race in all the generations to come. To these witnesses I might add the mighty names of Calvin, Bunyan, Doddridge, Chalmers, and a host more. As the great crowd has an impulse to

catch up the shout and ring it on, so thousands have been impelled to bear testimony to this doctrine, and the hope of its realization nestles lovingly in the soul of a great throng who have graves at which the heart's affection has a shrine. Going into the sphere of poetry, not a few, now sad and now glad, have touched the lyre and brought forth strains that found both their inspiration and music in the hope of recognition. I only stay now to repeat a few lines from Bickersteth's *Yesterday, To-Day, and Forever*. They are tender and beautiful. He is describing the experience of one on entering the abode of the blessed dead.

"And lo,

A valley opened on our sudden gaze,
Pre-eminently beautiful and bright
'Mid that bright world of beauty. But straightway,
Or ever I could utter words of praise,
Voices familiar as my mother tongue
Fell on me; and an infant cherub sprang,
As springs a sunbeam to the heart of flowers,
Into my arms, and murmured audibly,
'Father, dear father!' and another clasped
My knees, and faltered the same name of power.

"The one who nestled in my breast had seen
All of earth's year except the winter's snows;
Spring, summer, autumn, like sweet dreams, had smiled
On her.
And now, where we had often pictured her,
I saw her one of the beatified.

* * * * *

"And when I saw my little lambs unchanged,
And heard them fondly call me by my name,

‘Then is the bond of parent and of child
Indissoluble,’ I exclaimed, and drew
Them closer to my heart and wept for joy.

“But other voices of familiar love,
And other forms of light, reminded me,
By the deep yearnings of my soul, I was
Myself, not only a father, but a child;
Nor child alone, but brother, pastor, friend.
How often had I longed in dreams o’ the night,
Or meditative solitude, to see
The beaming sunshine of my father’s smile,
Which ever seemed to me a reflex joy
Cast from God’s smile; or haply oftener yet
My mother’s face of fond solicitude,—
Solicitous for all except herself.
They were before me now. Nor they alone;
Betwixt them leant a slender seraph’s form,
My sister’s spirit, who with frailest bark
Year after year had stemmed the wildest sea,
Pain, conflict, cloud, and utter weariness,
Till the last billow, almost unawares,
On its rough bosom bore her into rest.
And can this be that wave-tossed voyager,
This she? Radiant with beauty and with bloom,
As if the past had written on her brow
Its transcript in those shades of pensive grace
And breathing sympathy, wherein remained
Nothing of sadness, all of saintliness,
She stood and looked on me a moment, saying,
‘My brother, it is he!’ and on my neck
She fell; nor arms alone were interlocked
In that embrace. And then the pent-up thoughts
Of many years flowed from our eager lips,
As waters from a secret spring unsealed.”

It may be observed that this is poetry, and that some license has been indulged. True; but who will find aught in these lines to conflict with the beautiful, and pure, and truthful? The picture may seem highly colored to some, but to my mind the whole face and spirit of it are heavenly, and it brings a tribute not only to the mind that could produce such a vision, but most of all to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, in whose truth the whole sublime scene is rooted.

But I hasten yet to produce some testimony from the lips of the dying. When the martyr Stephen was dying, he “looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” And so it has more than once been given to the dying Christian to see the invisible, and to declare those heavenly hopes embosomed in the better life, the bright beams of which have already fallen upon the soul.

How fondly the heart has laid hold, and how sweetly the lips have spoken of the glad meeting on the other side. The evening before Luther’s death he spoke frequently of death and the eternal world. He was interrogated by some friends who were present on the subject of our present meditations. He answered: “How did Adam do? He had never in his life seen Eve—he lay and slept; yet, when he awoke he did not say, Whence did you come? Who are you? but he said: ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.’ How did he know that this woman did not spring forth from a stone? He knew it because he was full of the Holy Spirit, and in possession of the

true knowledge of God. Into this knowledge and image we will, in the future life, again be renewed in Christ ; so that we will know father, mother, and one another, on sight, better than did Adam and Eve." Bishop Burgess says : " Melancthon, a few days before his death, told Camerarius that he trusted their friendship should be cultivated and perpetuated in another world." How sweet and comforting and helpful must have been the fellowship of these great souls on earth, amid the commotion and trial of the Church ; and as they battled for the truth, how the hope of rest and reunion with those who were co-laborers with them in the conflict, must have been to their weary spirits as the sunlight breaking through the rift of the cloud to the mariner when the storm is battling with the sea ; yes, as the first burst of glory to the soul when, free and pure, it goes "sweeping through the gates."

The late Bishop Haven on the last night of his life, and when all visitors had gone out of the room, said : " Now we are alone, and must have a little time with our own family. Here are my two sisters, my two children. Where is my mother ?" And when she was brought in they stood in a circle round his bed in order that he might see them all. But his sight was failing, and, looking around the circle, he said : " Are we all alone ?" And, on being satisfied on this point, he gave the last of himself to God and to those on earth whom he loved best ; taking their hands one by one and saying : " This is my dear, dearest mother ; Mamie, my little sunbeam—dear pretty one ; Willie, my noble son ;" and then recurred the name which he

was ever whispering in the intervals of conversation : " Precious Jesus, blessed Jesus." There was another name also,—the name of her who had been a constant presence in his soul, though for fourteen years she had also been a presence among the angels of God. And when he knew he was about to die, he said, as if overwhelmed by the labors and journeyings through which and over which he had dragged himself, in spite of sickness, sorrow, and pain, for all these long lonesome years: " After I have seen the Lord I shall want to rest for the first thousand years with my head in the lap of my Mary."

Take away the hope of recognition, and the light and beauty and immortal love fades out of this beautiful scene.

Of Dr. Guthrie, it is said that in his last illness, " He delighted to talk of heaven, and of the many friends gone before who would welcome him there.

" In particular he pictured to himself his son John, who died in infancy and whose memory he always fondly cherished, running to the golden gate to meet him. He had no doubt of the recognition of friends in heaven, and in reference to this quoted the saying of an old woman: ' So you think we shall be more foolish in heaven than we are here? ' "

After a minister had prayed with him he was too weak to address him directly, but whispered to one of his sons standing by: " Tell him my journey is nearly ended. Ask him to pray that I may have a speedy entrance into heaven, and that we may have a happy meeting there, where we shall no longer have to pro-

claim Christ, but where we shall enjoy Him forever and ever."

Oh! it is delightful to hear these words from the dying, and they ought to be to the weary and sad as flashes of light that burst from the open gate as the departing enter; they should ring the sweetest melody into the "songs of the night," and give to every murmur the buffet.

And is there no appropriate significance in scenes like these? no strong intimation that the bond of a sanctified love shall never be broken, and that we shall know and gladly greet our loved ones in heaven? Is it not the testimony of our consciousness, the voice of our souls, the yearning of our hearts, as faith with a stronger wing soars toward the unseen and eternal? Blessed be God for a witness so noble in its source, so widespread in its heralds, so delightful and comforting in its purpose, and so beautifully harmonious with the unsullied immortality of the Gospel. From the Canaan of the best life and faith we bring to weary hearts, to all whose hope glimmers in the light that knows no shade, these ripe luscious clusters, and we feel sure that if read and accepted in the spirit of Christian hope and faith they will open the gates of the heavenly Canaan to the advancing step, and give a sublime reality to the hopes that beckon us on. "Thus take thy heart into the Land of Promise, show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys, show it the clusters of grapes, which thou hast gathered, to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey."

CHAPTER V.

“Smitten friends

Are angels sent on errands full of love ;
For us they languish, and for us they die.
And shall they languish, shall they die in vain ?
Ungrateful, shall we grieve their hovering shades,
Which wait the revolution in our hearts ?
Shall we disdain their silent, soft address ;
Their posthumous advice and pious prayer ;
Senseless as herds which graze their hallowed graves,
Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths ?”

“No man dieth to himself.” The dead and dying are not without a ministry to the living, and we shall fail of securing the best and most permanent results in the contemplation of this subject if we pass by unheeded the practical lessons and solemn counsels it furnishes. Who that has stood beside the pale form that was once instinct with life, but is now silent and awaiting that last service in which it can have no part,—concealment in the grave,—has not felt the solemn admonition, as if the mute lips were speaking, and turned away with reflections, that put a deep shadow on the pomp and vanity of a passing world, and gave prominence to those obligations and duties of life which culminate in the unseen and eternal. And so, as we speak of those to whom we are allied by the tenderest

ties and noblest affections, but who have gone from our homes and from our spheres of delightful communion, not to return any more, the very blessedness of the theme and of the prospect which it puts before us, beautiful as the star that illumined the faces of the wise men, should inspire us with holy caution to observe carefully the lessons taught, nor let them slip, until we have felt a strong impulse to greater fidelity and higher attainments "in all holy conversation and godliness." And yet as the eager traveller is deceived by the mirage so bright and promising, our danger may lie in the tender beauty and winning charm of the subject. I should rather not have lifted my pen than that one soul should be rocked into false repose, or be led to indulge a vain hope, by any utterance on these pages.

When the favored disciples beheld the "excellent glory" of the Transfiguration, enrapt with the heavenly splendor, the impetuous Peter would remain. But, then, what would have become of the world lying in wickedness, tortured with misery, and longing for deliverance? Times of rapture should fit us for seasons of service. When we have seen the glory on the mount, resplendent with its light, we should descend to the valley where sin struggles for supremacy, where pain and sorrow and death outvie each other in their gloomy conquest, and there, the stronger and better for what we have seen and hope for, scatter the darkness, destroy the evil, and lift other souls up to the same heavenly vision. It is a high function to enjoy, to have the spiritual endowment which reveals God

and opens heaven to the soul, but it is still a higher function to save. I should rather be instrumental in healing a soul, in striking from a human heart the debilitating pang of a withering sorrow, and in putting the glad inspiration of a Christly hope into a human life, than to dwell in a tabernacle whose sides threw off the brilliant sheen of heaven's jasper and amethyst. But we need not give up the vision and blessing the subject of these pages has brought us, and which, not so much because it is true, as because we have hope in Christ, delights us; only see to it that we employ the benediction for the improvement of ourselves and the help of others.

And after all there is no better test of any doctrine or truth of religion than the practical influence it has upon the lives of men. It is true of the subject of recognition. If it could be shown that in any legitimate way it does militate against the well-being of men, then it is no subject for beings environed as we are, and must be abandoned. If it only please a fancy, or answer a query, it is not worth the time, still less the labor, we have spent upon it. But we are glad to believe otherwise. It is a subject that sustains tender and solemn relations to the dearest and most sacred interests of our lives, and no man of any faith, or of any regard for those about him, can dwell upon it with anything like thoroughness, and not be compelled to say,—“If this doctrine be true my earthly relations must be corrected and elevated, all the forces of my being must be given a holy aim, and my whole self

and life must receive the baptism of a new consecration, else the future must bring to me a revolution in which I see nothing now but disaster." We believe we have in this subject one that is suggestive of many and wholesome lessons, one that appeals with great power to the heart, and effectually guards and enforces the positive conditions of the Gospel. It encourages no hope save through Him who is the sinner's Saviour; it justifies no murmuring under God's afflictive dispensations, nor does it allow excessive and idle longing for those who have been taken in advance of us.

"It bids us do the work that they laid down—

Take up the song where they broke off the strain;

Sojourning till we reach the heavenly town

Where are laid up our treasures and our crown,

And our lost loved ones will be found again."

1st. *The doctrine of heavenly recognition should exalt the Gospel in our esteem.* It is true it is not a positive dogma of the Christian religion, and we do not advance it as such; and yet it is only through the Christian faith that it becomes more than a conjecture or a thing of speculation, and it is only to the Christian's faith it makes consistent appeal and assumes the permanence of a blessed reality. Nothing will start the scoff of an infidel quicker than the hope we have ventured to indulge and to commend to others in these pages, for he knows whence it comes, and how very much stronger is its claim upon human credulity, and how very much nobler is the aspiration it furnishes than his own cold

and hopeless theory. It only seems fitting that such a hope should spring from the Gospel, or at least chime with its truth and spirit.

However limited the revelation of the Bible on heaven and kindred themes, it is there, and only there, we discover the unfolding of explicit truth, and the point from which is projected that which seems dim but beautiful in the distance. The whole Gospel is itself so much of heaven that it becomes the one beautiful garden from which we pluck these fragrant flowers of an unblighted paradise. Some of them are quite hidden away beneath the heavier foliage of larger bloom, like the little daisy or buttercup in an ample garden ; but still that is the soil in which they are rooted, and from what we see, and from what we find, we anticipate more beyond. Granting that the subject of our meditations is one of the smaller flowers, only a daisy among the great trees and majestic lilies of the Bible, still its roots are there, and we owe the hope directly or indirectly to the Gospel. As the great redemption, in the unfolding of the truth, in the living illustration of its power and spirit, and in the wider achievement of the divine plan, moves onward, we cannot but see in its bright train the assurance of that of which we have spoken.

To the Gospel we are indebted for that view of ourselves, both as to our origin and destiny, and for that exhibit of doctrines and truths which relate to our moral and spiritual nature, and for that experience which is characteristic of the new life, all of which

furnish us with a basis of argument and testimony that leads the spiritual mind conclusively to see the bright light of this hope, not only in the shadows of our present troubled way, but mingling with the glory that gilds the horizon beyond. I am sure I may appeal to the experience of any Christian, and say that the hope of recognition which makes him a daily companion of the dear departed would never have been what it is without the Gospel. Here, at this crystal fountain, it gets its sweetness, and beauty, and holy inspiration. And I think it quite common among the children of God that as they develop in grace and ripen for celestial service, that is, as they become themselves more perfect illustrations of the Gospel, this delightful hope becomes more and more a wholesome impulse, and a reality that does not diminish but magnifies their love for Christ. How much do we owe the Gospel that we may entertain and speak of this comforting prospect! It has sometimes been objected to the doctrine of recognition that it is inconsistent with supreme love to Christ, who is the centre of glory and joy in heaven, and that hence the Gospel can have nothing to do with it. I must confess I do not admire this objection, and would not notice it but for its relation to this part of the subject. The Gospel makes so much out of love, I mean love of the brethren, and so plainly teaches that it is and is to be the constant impulse of love to Christ, and to our own experience it is so apparent that the greater our love for the saints the greater our

love for their Master, that we must wonder that any one should press this objection with vehemence.

In heaven we shall know and love as saints of God redeemed by the blood of His Son, and that our love shall tower over all for Jesus, why shall it not be great for one whom He has loved with an everlasting love, and that it shall be great for such, why shall it not be greater for that glorious Saviour through whose grace alone the sublime faculty has come to possess us? In the happy home all the children love one another, but the stronger love, and the love of all, is centred on the father and mother; and so in the happier home above all the children know and love one another, but the supreme love, the love that is magnified by their unsullied fellowship, is centred upon God and the Lamb.

Nor does the Gospel teach anything else. Jesus bade his disciples, "Continue in his love." But that was by no means to lessen their love for one another; on the contrary he says: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

These words touch the climax of Christian character and attainment here. Will there be reversion in heaven? Manifestly, we are indebted to the Gospel for the assurance that it will not be in conflict with supreme love to Christ that we shall love one another so as to make fellowship a pleasing prospect, and because we shall love and fellowship with one another,

we shall not love Christ less, but more. Now, all this, entwined about our subject as ivy is entwined about a trellis, should lead us to put the Gospel in high esteem. What is this hope worth without the Gospel? Without the Gospel it were better blotted from vision, for its realization must be a gnawing worm, an angry flash on the cloud that envelops eternity.

You who have a right to the blessed prospect exalt the Gospel in your faith, your love and life, and the hope will become brighter and sweeter, and as you hasten toward its realization it will not be to diminish the tribute due to Jesus, but to say with glad and endless delight:

“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”

2d. *A second practical benefit resulting from a judicious consideration of this subject is the substantial comfort it furnishes.*

That is a beautiful utterance of the Apostle in his second letter to the Corinthians.

After the usual benediction, as if cherishing the discipline of trial, he breaks out in these rapt words: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Cor. 1: 3, 4.

A great shout starts from almost every page of the Bible, saying: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.”

It is a holy office with which God would endow us. Who in the fret and worry and pangs of human life does not need comfort? No matter what our spiritual attainment, be it indifferent or vigorous, we need consolation betimes. There comes to be heavenly music in the voice that whispers in our ear the "exceeding great and precious promises," or breathes upon the weary or smarting soul such a blissful hope as that which our struggling faith and love have plucked from the ashes of the hearthstone, and the dust of the grave, and put upon these pages. And if there is one thing in which the foul taint of selfishness is not to be found, it is in that comfort which has come to refresh our souls in sorrow and inspire them in care. It is something that remains and becomes more blessedly helpful by giving it away. God comforts us in our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.

But with respect to the theme of our thought and all the sweet promises of the Gospel, a distinction is made which we do well to keep in mind. We cannot help it if the doctrine of recognition only brings consolation to those who sustain friendly relations to the "God of all comfort." If this comfort must select its subjects, it is only because those whom God comforts have any faculty to appreciate and appropriate the benediction. If men will not put themselves in the way of that which is good and beautiful, they must not wonder nor chide any but themselves, if, when in the sorrows of life, comfort comes as an angel of consolation

but passes them by. I would that every heart in which these pages touch a sympathetic chord might find the comfort the subject is so well adapted to impart, but the condition of such comfort is not more in the subject than in the individual.

The great sorrow that so often blights the joy and blasts the hope of our mortal life, is not the pain or the calamity attending our departing friends, but it is their going from us. Oh, these painful and long separations, how they do lacerate the heart and fill our days with weary loneliness. What loving and genial spirits are every day torn from each other's embrace and mutual toil and enjoyment. But what if it were to be forever! How the hope of recognition, and a meeting as endless as it will be delightful, bridges over the wide gloomy gulf that lies between us and them.

Is it vain that we tell the bereaved that the separation which has caused such a sad blank in the life is only temporary, and that its final issue is a meeting in which all that made the fellowship here blessed will be magnified, and that no condition or evil shall ever undo it? Is it vain that those who count their own in the world beyond, and in this, call to mind the faces that grew pale, and the forms that would vanish despite their attentions, and then, over all the black cloud, behold, bright in the splendor of the Gospel, a bow of promise, which assures of a greeting, the joy of which shall be intensified in the fact that these are the same congenial spirits which long ago wrought and prayed and sang and wept together on earth? What

a mitigation of life's trials is not such a hope! What a help there is in it to that resignation which becomes us, and to the performance of those high duties which seem to have an increased value and sacredness in times of affliction! And can we think with any devoutness on this subject and not find comfort in the fact which it must suggest, that, though parted from some who were especially dear to us, it is only for a little time? Really what a short day stretches between us and ours in glory. The sun is descending, and for some the twilight is here, and they may look across the narrow sea and sing:

“Beyond the parting and the meeting
I shall be soon;
Beyond the farewell and the greeting,
Beyond the pulse's fever beating,
I shall be soon.”

How your poor lonely heart has brightened, and voiced itself out in song or thanks to God, when, after a long and possibly toilsome absence from the loved ones, you could at last feel that but one day lay between you and the sweetest spot on earth,—your own home! And so it is consolation that the journey is not long between yourself and that greeting which makes heaven an everlasting and unclouded home. And what peace comes to the spiritually-minded soul when, in meditation upon the departed, the thought comes as though an angel had descended to bear the tidings, that they are in heaven! What compensation is there

for such an assurance as that! Are those to be commiserated whose fond, sure hope that revelation utters? No; the poet is not rash and unfeeling when he says:

“’Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
How grows in Paradise our store.”

You might envy them their fellowship with their Lord, but I am sure you would not bid them back to the conflict and woes of this life, not even to engage again at the expense of their palms of victory in the good fight of faith. Is it your wife, your blessed mother? Oh, the Mount Zion to which they have come! Oh, what bliss and beauty as their glorified forms flash up from the glassy sea!

“Who would recall her to tread o’er again
The mortal path—from heaven’s pure bliss recall?
The wish were weakness—though full oft must fall
Thick blinding tears from eyes that once were fain
To catch her genial smile, ne’er sought in vain.

* * * * *

No, ye that loved her, now to heaven resign,
Nor wish her from that nobler life withdrawn;
The night of grief shall pass, and with the morn
Shall come sweet memories; and a face divine
With all your worthiest thoughts shall blend,
And a fair form your wandering step attend.”

It is comfort enough to inspire a shout, to put light on every cloud, to know that our loved ones are in heaven, and that, “stepping heavenward” ourselves,

we shall so soon be with them, and that then that pure unmarred joy, of which we know so little here, shall there be our mutual experience throughout eternity. As I write these lines, the world about me, the children in my home, the people to whom I minister, look more beautiful and become more sacred, and spontaneously my heart pours its grateful tribute of love and gratitude at the feet of Jesus, who, in the Gospel, comes so to comfort sorrowing humanity. Weep not, my friends, for your dead in Christ. Rather say, all hail! ye bright spirits on the brighter shores of a better world. We greet you from this side where death still reigns, and you greet us from that where the tramp of the conqueror is never heard, and where the bright hope of the Christian, in the sublime words of the Apostle, is the shout of the saints: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

"Ah! the way is shining clearer,
As we journey, ever nearer,
To our everlasting home;
Friends who there await our landing,
Comrades, round the throne now standing,
We salute you and we come!"

3d. *This hope of recognition should prove a constant impulse to holy living.*

Have we friends in heaven? Is the memory of them sunny, a very Gospel to us in the noble Christian ministries which it records? When we think of them, is the thought associated with hymns of praise,

with accents of prayer, with some old well-worn Bible, with a pew in the house of God, and with this and that service in the cause of Jesus Christ?

Then, how can we give ourselves up to the gaudy tinsel and the trifling frivolities of a vain world? how be content to love God a little and mammon much? Does it become those who have on them the benediction of such a hope to be sluggish in their spiritual life and indifferent to the glory God would reveal in them?

The graves of God's saints anywhere rebuke such a life, much more when the dust of those we knew sleep beneath. Greed for mammon, I had almost said, is the curse of Christendom. Let no man take pleasure in this subject who does not feel a recoil in his heart at the vain and transitory character of the world about him, and who does not hear a voice, with a seeming familiar sound, urging him toward spiritual realities in all he is and does. What mockery that we sit and think over, or speak upon, and listen to a subject like this, if we feel no urging toward that holy image which our loved departed have already taken on. As we think of those who have passed into the transfiguration of the saintly life, how everything that mars communion with Christ, and limits or destroys our spiritual apprehension and enjoyment, should be revolting to us.

But is it so, dear reader? And is it any tribute to the memory of those who have entered the "everlasting habitations" if, as we speak of them, we refuse to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily

beset us, that with a better consistency we may indulge the hopes they now realize? Never do we esteem the dead in Christ as we ought, nor have we any right, in quiet thoughtfulness or otherwise, to think ourselves in their embrace, or even in progress toward their destiny, unless by our own fidelity we feel justified in hoping that grace is fashioning us for that holy destiny which now is theirs. But surely the natural tendency of such a meditation is to lessen our love for this and increase it for a better world; to magnify our sense of obligation to Him who has bought us with His blood, and by all the ministries of His grace still seeks to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, it is well if, as Young sings :

“Our dying friends come o’er us like a cloud
To damp our brainless ardors, and abate
That glare of life which often blinds the wise.”

The disposition that yearns for Christ’s image, and which has come to be gladly familiar with the conditions of holiness, this is the disposition that will derive greatest profit from this theme. I can scarce conceive how we can take it into the sanctuary of our thought without an impulse at once to spiritual reflection. Think of that bright hope, all luminous with the light of which the Lamb is the centre! Think how great is the company the ages have gathered there from every clime! Think that among them are those we once knew, now pure as the spotless robes they wear, and beholding God’s face, and then can we help

but respond to the words of the Apostle: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

It is only what our beautiful theme warrants if in these words of another our own experience is told: "How like devotion does the place become to us when we sit alone and summon around us their familiar faces; or when we think of them in their white robes, with harps and palms, bending before the throne or walking in heavenly pastime! It makes us feel almost like the publican, who stood afar off, casting a wishful and reverent look toward the holiest place, but conscious of his unworthiness to enter it. A sweet penitence comes over our hearts, and we look immediately to Jesus for a fresh application of His cleansing blood, that we may be made more like those into whose holy society we expect soon to be introduced." By the memory of those whose last utterance on earth was a greeting of love or a shout of victory, and by the fond hope that we shall one day join them, and be one with them as they are now one with their Lord, let us see how holiness must be the crown and radiance of such an experience, and that our hope is only vain until our souls here and now, to be true to themselves, must heartily respond to this grandest description of the New Jerusalem: "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did

lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. 21: 22-27.

4th. *The doctrine of recognition should make us solicitous for the spiritual well-being of our children and friends.*

We have little to do with the objection sometimes urged against this hope, and explained elsewhere, that the possibility that we may not meet some of our friends in heaven makes the thought of recognition painful, and thus it is made to violate the perfect bliss of the better world, and so disproves itself. The objection assumes that present relationship carries over, and forgets that perfection which only can approve of and fellowship with that which conforms to Christ, and the holy ministries of the place. There is no reason for that confusion in heaven, so clearly implied in not knowing one another there, in the painful thought (painful here) referred to, but very much to urge us to labor for the present salvation of all these. In any event human ruin is such, and salvation is such, that we should neglect no opportunity to press the

claims of Christ upon the unsaved, but there is surely additional force given to the impulse, and a mighty solemnity put into the obligation, when we think of those who stand by us, and are of us, in the domestic and social circle, and still more, when we think of that conscious meeting at last so blessed, and yet so fixed in its conditions. Whatever be the distance between us morally and spiritually, there are those from whom we cannot get away in this world. They are tied to us by bonds that death only can sever. There are relations in this world that sometimes unavoidably bring the saint and profligate together, and the Christian heart clings to the wreck that bears his own name, and that heart bleeds most while the victim crashes on the rocks of ruin. Children born of the same parents; brothers and sisters who were cradled beneath the same roof; husbands and wives one in a devotion that keeps the home sunny, but remote as the poles in their religious lives; friends whom the associations of childhood or a beautiful congeniality of soul have blended in cheerful friendship, but who separate at the cross. These are some of the strange and often painful conditions of our human life with which we constantly meet.

Looking away from this world to the world above, and it is from this world we are to look now, for these relations all go down into the grave, what an appeal there is to us, who have come into the higher love and better hope, to labor for the salvation of these so near to us, that we may meet them beyond, not as pa-

rents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, but as saints of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and who to our memory and hearts were here below the subject of these blessed relations. The question of the recognition of our children and kin in heaven must be a secondary one with us, while these are strangers to Jesus Christ, are not cultivating one of the graces that constitute the heavenly character, and while we are allowing all opportunity to bring them into the conditions of the Gospel, to pass by unimproved.

The heart that can appreciate a subject like this is the heart that anticipates and desires the greatest number in that heavenly communion, and especially spares no occasion to bring those nearest by ties loving and sacred, under the radiance of the promised hope. Parents and children, husbands and wives, friends of the long bygone time, it is here you must think about whom you shall meet in heaven, if for any profit, and here you well may think seriously of the possibilities of that final meeting, for whatever is done to enlarge that fellowship must be done here. And as we think of that coming together of the long-parted, and of their glorious greeting, how can we resist the admonition of the solemn thought: "Shall I be there and those whom God in this lower sphere gave to me,—the children whose childhood was a picture in my home, that death sometimes shaded but never effaced from its sanctuary, or whom I saw grow up into the vigor and comeliness of man or womanhood,—shall

we all be there? The husband in whose embrace I found a pure affection, and in whose arm a fidelity of protection and help that put a coronal of reverence about his name; the wife who was a true helpmeet, an angel in the house; shall we all be there?" The fact of recognition and fellowship we may easily venture and wait for, but shall we all be there? This is the vital question that concerns us here and now, and may heaven forbid that, with the light of such a hope as our subject furnishes falling on our path, we should fail to do what we may to make the picture a reality. The Saviour that saved you, dear reader, waits to save your child, your husband, your wife, your friend, so that, loving in life, in death you need not be divided, and may stand at last in an everlasting fellowship, and chime your voices in redemption's song:

"I would that my dear ones might all be brought
To the feet of the Crucified;
Might be carried to Him when borne away
By the coldly rolling tide.

"But man is weak, although love be strong,
And I cannot but look to Thee,
And pray as thou prayedst in thine agony,
Oh, give them again to me!"

5th. *There is something in the thought of recognition that rebukes and forbids all uncharitableness and unkindness in our personal relations with each other as Christians. Our present relations with each other as brethren in Christ, and the character we claim to be growing into,*

are quite enough to restrain from all those utterances and feelings which so often mar the peace of human life, cause heartburnings, and put unhappy breaches between those whom God in the relationship of grace has joined together. But the very thought of such unsightly difference becomes doubly painful as we are reminded of the graves and the final meeting of those toward whom our love once chilled, or against whom our lips may have spoken rashly or unkindly. Among the bitter regrets of life, I am sure, are those that rush upon the memory in the presence of death, and mingle, do what we will, with the thoughts that cluster about those whom we expect to meet in heaven. At the time we thought we were justified in what we were so quick to feel, and say, and do, and that fell like the crash of a thunderclap on the divinest of human relations, until perhaps the poor heart that was struck never recovered from the shock; but now that the victim is gone we see how the cruel reflection had no root in our consistency or piety, but started up like an evil spirit from the muddy deep of our pride and selfishness. And now the misunderstood one, the misrepresented one, is not here any more, and reparation cannot be made. And is this not the secret bitterness which some hearts know, the grief which the grave only cures? Alas! that such a sullied blight should ever fall upon the Christian name. Alas! that such thought, or word, or feeling should ever mingle with the memories which we must recall with pain.

Be careful how you speak to and of those about you.

Be careful how you rush upon the spirit of a human being, lest you leave the mark of your violence there, and start a sob that will never be hushed until death hush it. Be careful how you treat any one whom God has made and loves; by to-morrow the golden bowl may crash at the fountain, and the silver cord be loosed, and you be left with a memory that will put a vein of melancholy in all your remaining days. Ah, yes! how the pale sweet faces of our dead, their dear names as mentioned with bated breath at the hearth-stone in quiet evening, the graves on which we have planted flowers—how these do remind us,

“Not to scatter thorns, but roses,
For our reaping by and by.”

We have regrets enough; let us so fulfil the law of love, so bear one another's burdens, so compassionate those who are out of the way, so esteem those who are of us, inmates of the same home, members of the same church, associates in the same community, as that their death and graves, and our thoughts of union with them in heaven, will not throw back upon us a reflection that will cost us bitter tears and demand sad penitence at the throne of grace. There is truth in this couplet of the poet:

“Be kind to each other through weal and through woe,
For there's many a sorrow for hearts here below.”

But there is a higher reason for tenderness and charity in our relations with one another as Christians. We belong to Christ, and to one another in Him. We

are supposed to love and represent Him at all times, and we boast a hope of great perfection and glory in the peaceful heavens above. And shall we allow any unkindness in our fellowship here to belie or blast the blessed hope above? With what beauty and tenderness the Holy Ghost puts us on our guard, and aims to develop in us that kindliness and gentleness which were so great in our Lord, and because of which He was so great among men, and which are so much in consonance with the spirit and joy of the hope of which we have spoken.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.” Rom. 12: 10. “With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Eph. 4: 2, 31, 32.

“In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 2: 3, 5. With such a spirit what sweetness and beauty in the hope of a happy meeting and eternal fellowship with Christ and the saints in glory.

“Be kind to each other through life to its close,
And when thou art free from its wishes and woes,
When freed from life’s tears, from its sorrows and sighs,
Be kind to each other and meet in the skies.”

6th. *This fact of recognition appeals strongly to the unsaved to make their peace with God.* Our life is full of strange contradictions, and one of them is the fact that the unsaved sometimes think about and even venture to entertain a hope of heaven. Very strangely does the Infinite Love sometimes apply itself in order to win men away from this world, so unworthy of their affection and devotion, and fix their thought upon that which is holy and permanent.

As with the words home and mother, so there is a charm in this word heaven, which sometimes even the sinful heart finds difficult to resist. It is quite possible that some tender memory may cause the title of this humble volume to take on an attractive beauty, and lead some unsaved one to the reading of these pages, and, who knows, they may become a Gospel to him, revealing the blessed Saviour to his needy soul, and then throw open to his advancing step the gates that

“Forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame.”

For such a benediction on the work we have prayed as we have written.

I am sure there are not a few who have no well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond to whom this subject has its own charm, and more than once the scene we have attempted to describe has stood out before them, and they have wept over the sins that should put such a yawning gulf between themselves and the blessed mother, the blessed wife, or the angel

child, the memory of whom is now so sweetly associated with heaven.

My dear unsaved one, shall that memory be lost, and be made to throw a dark shadow on their spotless beauty by your continuing to reject that Saviour who made them what they are,—“kings and priests unto God,”—and brought them where they are,—“to be forever with the Lord,”—and promises and waits to promote you to the same excellence and distinction? The love of Christ for man is the chief motive, but there are times when a single ray of light will accomplish more than the full splendor of the sun. So I come to you now, and in memory of that green grave, long or short it matters not, that has been to you so sacred a shrine during the weary years, and which keeps fresh in your mind a sweet spirit to whom the bliss and beauty of heaven are no longer things of wonder; and I appeal to you, by the love they once bore you, by the love you still bear them, by the hope you vainly cherish, and, above all, by His love and passion to whom they sing and at whose feet they cast their crowns, renounce sin, accept Christ, and a holy impulse, a new brightness, and an assurance will come into the hope to which you now vainly cling that will put it into the everlasting light beyond the veil. The names of all who have or shall come to that blissful abode are or must be written in the Lamb's book of life, and this record is only of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, but your name is not there. ♦

You have loved some who are there, but you have refused your love to Him who loved them first and gave Himself for them ; and now that death has separated them from you, will you allow death to write eternity on that separation ? And are you never, never more to meet those who must be beautiful in your vision as they are precious in your memory ? Not, certainly, can you come together by your tramping under foot the blood of the covenant, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Your loved ones in heaven, if such there be, accepted the gracious provisions of the Gospel. "Therefore are they before the throne of God." There is no other way for you. Without Christ, the sight of those radiant holy beings would torture you ; you would not possess anything in common, and your hell would be magnified by the heaven into which you had been thrust. Let the precious blood of Christ, His glorious righteousness, become your trust and hope now, and then there will be that in your heart that will now respond to the holiness and happiness and homage of your loved ones in heaven, and one of the cheering consolations of life as you fight your way to glory, will be the home-meeting and greeting they will accord you, as you pass the golden portals to go no more out forever.

God is the source of life and light and love and joy, and there, unsaved ones, you have no doubt are some you loved on earth and love still. In your deepest heart and sober moments I believe you desire to meet them.

I offer you, before I take my leave of you, it may be never to meet you until the heavens be no more, and when what I have written will unfold in the light of God, and in a certainty and beauty that no mortal may attain, in that bright prospect which lies on the horizon of the Christian's ongoing life,—I offer you the only condition of hope and blissful realization.

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Accept this truth, make it the life of your soul, and the soul of your life, and the beatitude of the sweet hope that has lighted our way through these pages, and all the other riches of sovereign grace, shall bless you now, and delight you throughout eternity.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

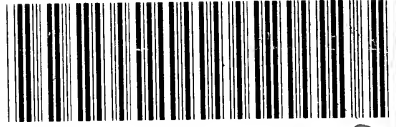
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